

M E R E D I T H.

BY

THE COUNTESS OF BLESSINGTON.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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M E R E D I T H.

CHAPTER I.

THE evening previous to our departure from Meredith Park, I went to take leave of the grave of my mother. How many melancholy reflections stole over my mind as I bent over her narrow bed, and recalled a thousand proofs and instances of her goodness and fondness for me! How calm and tranquil was that spot, hallowed to me as her resting-place, and designed to be mine own, whenever Death should claim me. The silence was only broken by the plaintive notes of the thrush and blackbird, which sounded

sweetly to me, and harmonized with the tender melancholy which pervaded my mind as I reflected that this was the last time for months—nay, perhaps for years, that I should again visit this sacred spot. Willingly would I have given up all the enjoyment held out to me in this projected sojourn in foreign lands to have remained in the solitude of Meredith Park, endeared to me by so many fond associations with the memory of my beloved mother, and to have the power of daily visiting her tomb. I knelt, and prayed that I might never forget her, and that her memory might ever influence my future conduct. Above all, I prayed that, let Death claim me when or where it might, my remains should be laid by the side of hers. When I arose from her grave, I determined on not sleeping before I addressed a letter to my guardian, requesting that if I died on the Continent, my corpse should be brought back to Meredith Park for inter-

ment. I could not tear myself away from the spot without again kneeling to implore, with the superstitious feeling of youth, the blessing of my sainted mother. Shedding many tears, I stole to my chamber, anxious to avoid observation, as my swollen eyes would have betrayed the grief I had been indulging. Lockly, the good and faithful Lockly, was not to be defrauded of the *tête-à-tête* with me which she had promised herself. I found her in my room, weeping bitterly; for the approaching separation from me had revived her sorrow for her lost mistress. Long did she stay, by turns advising, soothing, and warning me against all the dangers which her imagination could raise up as likely to assail me in a foreign land. Emphatic prohibitions against putting on linen or stockings unaired were mingled with solemn warnings against papist idolatry; and recommendations never to overheat myself, or to drink cold beverages when warm,

were interrupted by fervent prayers that I might not be taken in by any of the foreign ladies, who, from all that she ever could learn, were no better than they should be. “O think, dear Mr. Meredith, what an awful thing it would be to bring home a mistress to Meredith Park that could not speak English nor read the Bible—that could not go to church with you on the Sabbath day, nor understand a word I had to say to her. It would break my heart, that it would. And mind not to eat too much fruit, for the sun spoils them in those hot countries; while with us the hot-houses half cook them, and prevents them doing us harm.”

When at length she left me, I found my hand wet with her tears, and could hear her sobs as she slowly retreated to her chamber. Poor Lockly! she had not forgotten her departed mistress, although she had transferred so large a portion of the love she bore her to her son.

At an early hour next morning I found myself seated *vis-à-vis* to Lord Lymington in his roomy and luxurious travelling coach.

“Sit by me, Mr. Rivers,” said his lordship.

“Let me not incommod you, my lord; I shall do perfectly well on the front seat with Mr. Meredith.”

“No, no, sit by me; for if you are opposite to me, you will not leave me sufficient room to stretch my legs.”

“Had not Mr. Meredith best sit by your lordship while I take the seat *vis-à-vis* to him?”

“No; for then I should be obliged to lean forward in order to hear what you say, or to make myself heard.”

When we halted for the night, having only gone about fifty miles, an excellent dinner, ordered by Lord Lymington’s courier, awaited us, the merits and demerits of which furnished a fruitful topic of discussion to the Peer and Mr. Rivers.

“ I had no idea that so good a repast could be found in an English inn,” observed the latter, “ where tough mutton chops and tougher beefsteaks, with hectic chickens and fishy ducks, form the staple commodity of dinners.”

“ I am too experienced a traveller to trust to the tender mercies of innkeepers in any country, but above all in England,” replied Lord Lymington.

“ My own cook, with his *batterie de cuisine*, and a good supply of *comestibles*, occupy the portion of my *fourgon* that is not devoted to my portable bed, sofa, easy chair, carpets, and other *meubles* necessary to my personal comfort. The *fourgon* always precedes me by four or five hours, so that on arriving I find my apartments tolerably well arranged, my dinner prepared, my wine iced, and am thus rendered independent of the *désagrémens* of inns; the very best of which are, in my opinion, insupportable.”

Lord Lymington and Mr. Rivers did ample justice to the dinner, notwithstanding that Dr. Porson repeatedly warned his patient against his inordinate indulgence in truffles and *champignons* with which many of the *plats* were prepared. The *gourmand*, for he was a *gourmand* as well as an epicure, angered by the remonstrances of his physician, asserted that the only use of a medical man was to furnish correctives to prevent bad effects from *gourmandise*, and that *he* was determined not to deny himself any of the pleasures which alone rendered existence supportable. It was really pitiable to witness the unreasonableness and utter want of feeling of this spoiled child of Fortune, and the annoyance he inflicted on his really attentive and skilful physician, who, aware of the inevitable result of his patient's intemperance, endeavoured, but in vain, to warn him. Two hours after dinner, an enlargement in the epigastric region occasioning much pain and

uneasiness to Lord Lymington, produced a remarkable alteration in his manner towards the Doctor.

“ My dear Porson !” said he, with a lengthened face and a pallid countenance, “ I feel very ill. You must prepare something for me to take, and with as little delay as possible, for I can hardly breathe.”

“ You see, my lord, the consequences of your indulging in truffles and mushrooms.”

“ You were right, my dear Porson, in proscribing them. Yes; quite right, and I shall certainly not eat them any more, but—oh! oh! Be quick! Give me something. I have such horrid pains! Never was there such a—there again! Ah! ah!”

The medicine administered by Doctor Porson soon produced a salutary effect. The pains in the epigastric region ceased, the swelling of the stomach gradually abated, and with the cessation of pain departed the

affectionate words of the Peer for his physician. No longer did his lordship address him as his “dear Porson,” or look up in his face with a piteous expression of suffering, but having declared that his illness, though sharp, had been of so brief a duration as to convince him that it was not of a serious nature, he told Doctor Porson he should retire to bed, and only coldly nodded in acknowledgment of the Doctor’s kindly expressed hope that his lordship might enjoy a comfortable night’s repose.

“What a bore it is to be obliged to have a travelling physician,” said Lord Lynmington to Mr. Rivers, as soon as Porson had left the room.

“But if the necessity for one exists, it is fortunate to find so skilful a one,” replied my preceptor. “Yours, my lord, relieved you in a very short time, I must say, which gives me a very favourable opinion of his abilities.”

“O, hang the fellow! I have no cause

to complain of his want of ability; but what I blame him for is, that his treatment cannot enable me to indulge in my favourite dishes with impunity. I can no more eat truffles, *champignons*, and a hundred other good things, than before I engaged him; and the only difference I find is, that his treatment abridges the suffering induced by a surfeit of them. Now, if you happen to know any physician who could so manage as to enable me to indulge my appetite without paying the heavy penalty I at present incur, I would immediately engage him; for although I acknowledge Porson's skill in quickly procuring me relief, I am heartily tired of the constant remonstrances, which destroy the pleasure of my dinners."

Mr. Rivers looked surprised at the Peer's *naïve* avowal of selfishness and ingratitude, but Lord Lymington was so wholly self-engrossed that he was regardless of the impression he had given.

It happened that the chamber assigned to me was only separated from that of my guardian by a slight wooden partition, so that I was an unwilling listener to all the conversation that passed between him and his *valet-de-chambre* while he was undressing.

“I have really been very unwell this evening, Dunington,” observed Lord Lymington; “and I must acknowledge that Doctor Porson’s prescription very soon relieved me.”

“It would be much better, my lord, if he could *prevent* the frequent recurrence of such disagreeable attacks; and if he was so skilful a physician as he sets up to be, he *could* do so; but it seems to me that he lets these frequent attacks come on just to prove to your lordship how quickly he can relieve you, and how impossible it would be for your lordship to do without him.”

“Well, Dunington, there may be something in what you say.”

"Ay, my lord; there is, indeed, and I am not the only person who thinks so."

"Other persons, then, have remarked that although Doctor Porson can relieve me, he cannot, or, at least, does not, prevent the frequency of these attacks?"

"Yes, they have, indeed, my lord. Why, there was the Duke of Boltonmill's valet, Mr. Masters, a very sensible, clever man, my lord, I assure you, said, 'Well, Dunington,' says he to me, 'so my Lord Lymington still suffers from those plaguy attacks in the stomach. Well, if I was his lordship,' says he, 'I would make a bargain with my doctor that I'd pay him for preventing them, and not for merely relieving them.' And there was the Marquis of Wilderton's valet, Mr. Tomkins, quite a superior man, I can assure your lordship, and he says to me, 'I am sorry to hear that Lord Lymington is so continually suffering from attacks in the stomach. This ought not to be, for his

lordship is still a young man, quite in the prime of life, as a person may say ; and his doctor should prevent such attacks. Why, there's the Marquis,' said he, ' who is at least ten years older than Lord Lymington, and he never has any of them."

" Did he say the Marquis was ten years older than me?" asked my guardian.

" Yes, my lord, and I answered, ten years, indeed! Why, Mr. Tomkins, I'd venture to bet a guinea that the Marquis is at least fifteen years older than my lord."

" Then you would lose, Dunington," said Lord Lymington ; " for the Marquis of Wilderton and I are of the same standing. We were at Eton and Christ Church together."

" Is it possible, my lord? Well, no one ever could suppose it; for certainly the Marquis looks old enough to be your lordship's father."

" Wilderton, it is true, *does* look much older than he is, but not so much so as you think."

“ I assure you, my lord, that every one takes your lordship to be quite a young man—that is, a young nobleman; and people are quite surprised that you have a doctor travelling about with you, as it is supposed in general that only elderly gentlemen have them. I am sure I often wonder at your lordship’s patience with Doctor Porson, and say to myself, well, if I was his lordship, I’d have a doctor that would not be tormenting me with—‘ Pray, don’t eat this,’ and ‘ don’t touch that,’ just for all the world as if your lordship was one of those old gouty gentlemen that are wheeled about in chairs from place to place.

“ ‘ I suppose,’ said the mistress of this inn to me, ‘ it is for the pale-looking young gentleman that the doctor, as I heard one of the footmen call him, is travelling with the earl?’ ”

“ ‘ Yes,’ answered I.

“ ‘ I thought so,’ said she; ‘ for his lordship

looks a fine healthy nobleman—ay, and as handsome a one as ever I set my eyes upon.'

"' You're not the only lady as says the same thing,' says I.

"' I'll be sworn not,' says she; ' for we women, whether of high or low degree, know when we see a handsome man. Is his lordship married?'

"' Not yet, ma'am.'

"' More's the pity, for I'm sure he'd make any fine young lady happy.'

"' His lordship is mighty particular in his choice,' says I.

"' And no wonder, when he is such a handsome nobleman,' says she. ' I am sure that you who are his *valet de sham* know that there are many beautiful ladies in love with his lordship,' says she.

' Mum,' says I, putting my finger to my lips, ' I never tells my lord's secrets to no one.'

"So then she laughed, and walked away, saying, 'Oh, I see you're a cunning chap.'"

"Ah!" said Lord Lymington, with something between an exclamation and a sigh, "perhaps it would have been as well if I had married. Miss Elmsly was a very fine girl, and I do believe very much attached to me."

"No young lady could help being in love with your lordship, for the matter of that," observed Dunington; "but Miss Elmsly having no fortune, people were spiteful enough to say that your lordship's great wealth had something to say in influencing her affections; and for my part, I could not bear the notion that people should think such a handsome nobleman as your lordship was only married for your fortune."

"I don't care a *sous* for what people may say," observed my guardian, and I am now sorry that I did not marry Miss Elmsly. Her beauty and accomplishments rendered

her in every way worthy the honour I designed her; and I was wrong not to have availed myself of the preference which she decidedly entertained for me."

"There's plenty of time yet for your lordship to marry, and there's as good fish in the sea as ever was caught, my lord."

"Ay, so you always say, Dunington; but time does not stand still with me any more than it does with others; and if I put off marrying much longer, it will be too late to wed at all, or at least to marry the only sort of person I would have. Youth and beauty are indispensable requisites in the lady who is to be Countess of Lymington; and the want of good family I could not look over in the mother of the future earl."

"Your lordship is quite right; and you surely are entitled to have a beautiful young bride of high family; but I don't see why your lordship should not look for a large fortune too; for although you have great

estates and plenty of ready money, still it is pleasant to get more. Besides, when a nobleman marries a lady with a large fortune, no one can suspect that he was chosen for his money."

" Well, Dunington, if I had married the rich heiress, Miss Middleton, I should have had youth, beauty, good family, and fortune too; yet I remember you never liked the prospect of my marriage with her."

" Because I could not bear, my lord, to hear people saying at every side that Miss Middleton would only wed your lordship for sake of being a countess, and that hurt my feelings, knowing as I do that the richest and noblest young beauties would have been proud and delighted to marry such a handsome nobleman as you, my lord."

Here, overpowered by sleep, I heard no more; but inexperienced as I was, what I had heard fully developed to me the weakness and imbecility of Lord Lymington, and

the low cunning of the artful valet, who, it was plain, governed by means of the grossest flattery him who was suspicious of every one else around him.

CHAPTER II.

ARRIVED at Dover the next day. On ascending the stairs of the inn, we encountered an elderly lady and gentleman, attended by a fine-looking young man and two very lovely girls. The elderly lady, who, it was evident, was the mother of the youthful group, still retained the traces of considerable beauty, although of an excessive *embonpoint*, which rendered the ascent of the stairs, even though assisted by her son, a very fatiguing operation. The elderly gentleman, a tall, thin, *distingué* looking man, bowed coldly

to Lord Lymington, while the lady coloured, as she acknowledged, by a formal bend of the head, the embarrassed salutation of my guardian.

“Strange that we should meet!” muttered he, when seated in his room, after a silence of some minutes. “Six and twenty years have now passed since last I saw her! What a change! She who used to look like a sylph, ay, and bound like one amid the parterre at her mother’s villa, now grown into that most abominable of all things—a stout lady. Faugh! The very term has something disgusting in it. And *he*, too, who was inclined to be fat, has grown into ‘the lean and slippered pantaloon.’ How she panted as her unwieldy figure toiled up stairs. Strange! strange! Had I married her, which I was so near doing, *I* might have been the father of that fine-looking young man and those beautiful girls! By-the bye, one of them greatly resembles what

she was. Well, I had a good escape ; for it would have been a horrid bore to find myself, while still a comparatively young man,—and he looked in the mirror complacently,—jostled out of gay life by a son arrived at manhood, and considering himself, as all grown-up sons do in these degenerate days, extremely ill used by his father continuing to keep him out of the estates of which he is longing to take possession.”

This soliloquy, uttered aloud, produced a smile from Mr. Rivers, which being noticed by Lord Lymington, he observed, “ I have been speaking aloud, have I not ? I have a habit of doing so when anything excites me. You noticed that fat lady we met on the stairs, Mr. Rivers ?”

“ Yes, my lord ; and a finer countenance I never beheld.”

“ If you had known her twenty-six years ago, you would have said a more lovely face could not be seen ! I was so entirely of this

opinion, that, after a courtship of some months' duration, I proposed, and was accepted by that lady. She was the only child of the Dowager Countess of Mellebrooke; had but a small portion, the estates of her deceased father having been entailed on a distant relative. She, however, was so universally admired and sought that she had refused no less than three very advantageous offers of marriage before I had made mine. Indeed, she acknowledged to me, after all the preliminaries for our marriage had been arranged, that a preference for me had led to their rejection. Yes; she was, I do believe, fondly attached to me. Poor thing! Did you observe how embarrassed she looked when I bowed to her? I dare say the poor woman, if the truth was known, still retains her early preference for me. Women, I believe, Mr. Rivers, never wholly conquer what is called their first love; but it is very different with men, as

I know by experience—the *last* love being that which we most appreciate.”

“ Not always, my lord. I have known instances where men continued through life to retain a lively interest in the object of their first attachment.”

“ I can’t say that this has been the case with me. Thinking of one’s early loves makes one feel so horribly old, while each new attachment gives the illusion of youth by exciting some of its emotions. The worst is, that after a certain age one’s attachments are of such brief duration. In the person who seemed charming at first, we soon discover defects, and, disappointed, seek in a new object those perfections we expected to have found in the former.”

“ But may not the fault be in ourselves, my lord, in our blunted feelings, which, like the appetite of a sated epicure, require novelty to excite them?”

“ I am not given to search into *causes*,”

said Lord Lymington, “ I am more prone to notice *effects*; and though there may be some truth in your remark, it is enough for me to know that a face, even though the loveliest in the world, no longer delights me, to make me seek another in order to renew the emotion at first caused by the former.”

“ But this system, if acted upon, would create great unhappiness in the world, my lord. What would be the feelings of a young and pure-minded girl if, after a man had won her affections, he was, when no longer captivated by attractions that had lost their novelty, to turn to some other object in search of it?”

“ There may be something in that, Mr. Rivers; but, by Jove! I never viewed the business in so grave a light before. And, after all, a man must think of his own comfort before he considers that of the woman who may happen to love him. If, out of pity, he continues to shew her, after his

passion has ceased, the same kindness and attention she experienced when he loved her, *he* will be bored to extinction, and if he does not, *she* will, as you say, be, unhappy. If *one* is to suffer, surely you could not expect that a man would sacrifice his own happiness? I certainly would not mine. But to resume, and to prove to you the little faith I have in early attachments: I once loved the lady we met on the stairs; yes, positively loved her to folly, until she consented to marry me; yet I have not bestowed a thought on her for the last six and twenty years! Nevertheless now that we met so accidentally, all the events connected with our engagement come back as fresh to my memory as if they had occurred only yesterday; and, I dare say, that she also, poor woman! is at this moment thinking of the happy time when she looked forward to being my wife. You saw how she changed colour, did you not?"

" I did not observe it," my lord.

" I did, poor soul! Heigh ho! By Jove! it nearly killed her."

" If not an indiscreet question, my lord, I should like to know how your marriage was broken off. The lady was not likely to prove faithless; and your lordship, I presume, was then as little disposed to inconstancy?"

" *She* certainly did not; indeed, few women could have been inconstant to me, for I was considered to be the best-looking young fellow about town. Nor was I, according to my own opinion, faithless; although many people, and especially her family and friends, accused me of fickleness. Within two days of the one named for our nuptials, I forced her to a water-party, for which I had made such expensive preparations, that although the weather threatened rain, I was not willing to postpone it. Her mother, and indeed herself, objected to go, but I over-

ruled their objections, and carried the point. The day turned out to be wretched ; she took a severe cold, and on the morrow was pronounced to be dangerously ill. Our marriage was consequently postponed ; and when, after three or four weeks' confinement to her chamber, my intended bride was allowed to receive a visit from me, I found her totally altered in appearance, pale and thin, and with a cough which sounded like a death-knell in my ear. I consequently determined to await the result before I took any further step relative to our marriage. Not so her lady mother, who suggested to me, that as my betrothed was still delicate, and that a mild climate was recommended for her, she thought it very advisable that our nuptials should at once take place, and that we should depart for the South of Italy, where a winter's residence could not fail to restore the health of her daughter. I could not conceal the surprise and disapprobation

I felt at so preposterous a project, and advised, in preference to its adoption, that she should take her daughter to Italy, where I could join them whenever, if ever, her health was restored; but that to marry her at present, and so become a nurse instead of a bridegroom, was totally out of the question. Lady Mellebrooke chose to take this proposal ill, and be offended. She accused me of want of affection for her daughter, and I honestly stated, that when I offered my hand, the object of my affection was in good health, and in high beauty, while now she appeared to me to be in a consumption, and her beauty was certainly much impaired. Would you credit it, the mother became angry—said I could have no feeling to act in such a manner, regretted that her poor child, as she called her, had ever known me, laid the blame of her illness on the cold she had caught, owing to my obstinacy in forcing her to go on the water

on a bad day; and, in short, said a thousand unreasonable and absurd things. I grew angry, and declared I would never marry her daughter. She burst into tears, and asked me—nay, prayed me not to endanger the life of her child, by letting it be known, in her present weak state, that I had refused to fulfil my engagement to her, and I, good naturedly, consented to keep on the mask until her strength was a little restored, though secretly determined never to marry a woman of delicate health—a step which might not only interrupt the enjoyment of my life, by making my house an hospital, but might seriously endanger my own health and that of my posterity. To say the truth, my passion had greatly abated from the day I felt sure of her becoming mine. *Que voulez vous?* I had been kept so long in suspense, she had so many suitors, and her mother was so scrupulous about the character of him who was to be the successful

one, that my feelings were wound up to the utmost pitch of excitement. Once accepted, and sure of her, the love daily, hourly, decreased, and all her other suitors being dismissed, I no longer experienced any of those fears which are as necessary to keep alive love as thorns are to guard the rose. But to resume my story: the invalid was persuaded by her mother that the marriage was prohibited for a year, by her physicians, and so she remained in perfect ignorance of my refusal to wed her. Lady Mellebrooke, the proudest and most stately dame that I ever happened to meet, but also the most doting mother, was now obliged, while hating me for what she was pleased to consider my selfish conduct, to conciliate me, in order that my visits should not cease. My position was rather an awkward one, for her daughter, believing that she was to be my wife as soon as her health was restored, nay more, thinking that my

consent to the postponement of a year was a new proof of my affection, lavished on me all those nameless and indescribable attentions which the most pure-minded and modest young creatures can evince towards a betrothed husband, without losing the least portion of that delicacy and dignity which form so great an attraction in them. There was something positively touching in her manner towards me; so much so, that at times I was almost tempted to break through the resolution formed by my prudence, and by marrying her, acquire the right of accompanying her abroad, and watching over her health. At such moments, I used to catch her mother's scornful eye fixed on my face with an expression of contempt and dislike, that only subsided when they melted into pity for her deceived daughter, and large tears coursed each other down her pale face. My prudence, however, vanquished my temporary irresolu-

tion; and as I reflected on the anxiety and personal inconvenience to which I should be exposed by travelling with an invalid, I congratulated myself on my firmness; although when her mother demanded her portrait from me, it cost me a pang to resign it. The moment of parting was a very painful trial to her poor gentle soul, and a very awkward one to me. She wept on my shoulder as she whispered me not to be uneasy about her, and urged me to join her soon, while her stately mother looked daggers at me, and almost tore her daughter from my arms. She went abroad, and after some months, recovered. When her mother thought her strong enough to bear the shock, she broke to her my refusal to wed her, and her opinion of what she considered to be my unfeeling conduct. Women, even the oldest of them, Mr. Rivers, have such crochety notions about love. They fancy that everything else is to be sacri-

ficed for it, and when they can no longer excite the passion themselves, they take up arms for their female relatives and friends. A prudent man is, by them, sure to be accused of selfishness and want of feeling, &c., consequently, I conclude that I was not spared by Lady Mellebrooke when she told her daughter what had occurred between us. However that may be, although prepared for a letter of reproach, I heard no more of the fair girl to whom I really had been attached, until I received, through my bankers, a parcel containing my portrait, and all the *gages d'amours* which I had presented to Lady Mary when our marriage had been arranged. Not a line accompanied them, which, I own, rather surprised and somewhat mortified me. I heard by chance, from a person who had met them in Italy, that Lady Mary had a severe relapse, and was reduced nearly to the grave, and by comparing dates ascertained that this

must have been immediately after the disclosure made by her mother, and the return of my portrait and gifts. I expected no less, for the poor girl really loved me passionately, and so did I her at first, but her illness alarmed me for my future comfort. Well, the fair invalid was taken to place after place in Italy for change of air. People who met her told me that she was a complete wreck, with spirits broken, and little chance of living ; and then I congratulated myself that I had not married her. In three years after I went to Baden, and the first person I saw there was my old flame, looking more bloomimg than ever, which shews you that women don't die of love, whatever people may pretend. In a few hours afterwards, I learned that, even while in the delicate state of health I have described, she had won the affection of the Marquis of Leominster, who followed her, like her

shadow, whenever she moved, and became joint nurse with her mother. After two years unceasing assiduities, he was rewarded by her perfect recovery to health, and her fair hand; which was only accorded to him a few days before they left Italy for Baden, whither they had been recommended to repair for the benefit of her mother. I quitted the place next day, not wishing to encounter the stern gaze of the cold and stately Dowager Countess of Mellebrooke, or to awaken painful feelings in the breast of her daughter, who, I was fully convinced, still entertained for me a sentiment incompatible with her new duties. I have only occasionally heard of the Marchioness of Leominster since, and out of delicacy to her feelings have carefully avoided all intercourse, and now that she retains not even a trace of that elegant figure and lovely face which justified my youthful preference for her, I rejoice that the moving

mass of flesh so disagreeable to contemplate, is designated by any title rather than that of Lymington. Fancy me, who have so perfectly retained my figure—and he stood up to exhibit it—supporting on my arm such a woman as Lady Leominster now is. The very notion shocks me! And then the horror of having a young man, six feet high, with whiskers, calling me father, spending my money, and wishing me dead, that he might step into my shoes. Fancy *me* travelling about with an immensely fat wife, and two full-grown daughters, for whom husbands are to be found. The very thought appals me. I have been saved all this by my prudence, and have reason to be thankful for the escape."

Lord Lymington looked disappointed at Mr. Rivers not paying him any compliment on his boasted prudence, while my preceptor, having walked to the window, made some remark on the weather. Inexperienced as I was,

the gross selfishness of my guardian shocked and disgusted me, and I felt surprised at the *naïveté* and self-complacency with which he related to an acquaintance of such short standing, a tale so little creditable to himself. It appeared, however, that far from being ashamed of his conduct, he was proud of it, and positively thought that instead of condemnation it was calculated to excite praise.

CHAPTER III.

PREVIOUS to embarking for our short voyage to Calais, Dr. Porson was directed by Lord Lymington to prepare whatever medicine or mixture he thought most likely to prevent sea-sickness; but although the Doctor explained the necessity of a slight and simple breakfast, in order to second the effect of the preventive he administered, his patient's habits of self-indulgence and epicureanism were too deeply rooted to yield to his representations. As luxurious a repast as could be prepared by Lord Lymington's cook, to

which the Peer did ample justice, defeated the effect of the Doctor's prescription. Before we had left the pier ten minutes, my guardian, with jaundiced face and rueful looks, muttered curses, not loud, but deep, at the inefficacy of the powders and draught he had swallowed; while Dunington shook his head, and said, "It was always the case with his lordship, who, although condemned to take the most nauseous medicine, and to submit to a system of starvation enough to endanger the health of a person of even the strongest constitution, escaped none of the annoyances which such a treatment was intended to preclude."

"Can you give me nothing to check this terrible sickness?" demanded Lord Lyning-ton.

"I do not think, under the present irritation of the stomach, it would be safe to administer anything, my lord," answered the Doctor.

"I must have something, for I cannot stand this suffering. Dunington, Dunington—Oh! oh!" A violent paroxysm of sickness prevented further speech; but the groans of the Peer were really piteous.

"A drop of white brandy, my lord; it will really do your lordship good; do, my lord, taste it," said Dunington, raising the glass to his master's lips.

"I cannot sanction this, my lord," observed Doctor Porson. "Unaccustomed as your lordship is to spirituous liquors, I foresee great danger in your having recourse to such a measure."

"So you will neither give me anything to relieve me yourself, nor allow me to take what is advised by another," muttered Lord Lymington. "Dunington—Oh! oh!" and another paroxysm more violent than the former followed.

"Take it, my lord," said the valet, looking triumphantly at the Doctor, and again

raising the glass of brandy to his lord's lips. It was drank with an avidity that produced so violent a fit of coughing, that a vessel in the chest gave way, and a sanguine stream flowed copiously from the mouth of the unfortunate Peer, who, before the vessel reached Calais, was in a state of insensibility, and expired shortly after. Nothing had been left undone by Doctor Porson in order to prolong the life of his patient; but his efforts, aided by those of another medical man who happened to be a passenger in the packet, were fruitless. Pale, and stupified by the blow, he remained sitting by the corpse, wholly absorbed by painful reflections; while Dunington, with clamorous grief, bewailed the loss of his dear lord, yet diligently occupied himself in opening writing-cases, dressing-boxes, and plate-chests; the contents of which he not only carefully noted, but partially abstracted

during the first hour of hurry and confusion that followed the sudden catastrophe.

The innkeepers of Calais, who were ranged on the pier, to solicit the custom of the passengers for their respective hotels, looked blank when told that the only passenger of distinction on board was a dead, instead of a living lord. They objected to receive the corpse, being of opinion that a lord who cannot eat or drink is not a profitable guest; and these same persons, who two hours, or even one hour previously, would have disputed for the honour of his presence at their hotels, now declined to allow his body a chamber. The captain of the packet waited on the public authorities, in order that a place might be assigned for the remains of the Earl to rest in; until a messenger was dispatched to England to his solicitor for instructions as to the interment.

Mr. Rivers seemed to be the only person

capable of acting in this dilemma; for Doctor Porson, stunned by the unexpected event that had taken place, had lost all presence of mind; and Dunington was so busily occupied by what he called “arranging his poor dear lost lord’s effects,” that he forgot to shew any respect to his corpse; which, still in the elegant habiliments in which the defunct had been clothed but a few hours before, was extended on the berth where he had been placed when the fatal rupture of the blood-vessel occurred. This was indeed a fearful death-bed scene! There lay the remains of the selfish voluptuary, who during life had thought only of self, and whose sole study had been to administer to the gratification of that now senseless body, which all shrank from with disgust. No fond and faithful wife, tried partner of youth, no affectionate son, or tender daughter, wept over the dead. No friend looked on the pale, marble-like face, and stark form, with mournful interest,

and no attached domestic watched the corse, and kept away the gaze of idle curiosity. Meet death for such a life as Lord Lyning-ton's had been—a life in which friendship had been repelled lest it might entail trouble; love slighted, lest it might occasion pain; and gratitude never incurred, because on none did the departed confer those benefits which are calculated to awaken it.

Mr. Rivers ordered a coffin to be instantly prepared; and so short was the time allowed for its completion, that it was one of so very plain and simple a description, that had the deceased during life beheld such a bed assigned for the last resting-place of even the humblest of his menials, he would have turned from it with disgust. Yes, rude and unadorned was the narrow bed on which was to repose the pampered form of the Sybaritic voluptuary, whose slumbers in life a crumpled rose-leaf on his couch would have broken. Yet now “he slept well,” in-

sensible that rough and strange hands placed him in his last bed; that loud and harsh voices talked of him as of common clay; that careless eyes looked on his marble face, scrutinized the *recherchés* habiliments, of which in donning them on the morning he had felt vain, and laughed unfeelingly as they noticed the artistically-made *toupet*, which when he was in life had passed for being the growth of his head, but in his agony had become twisted awry! How many brilliant projects for the future had he planned the preceding evening! What schemes for winters to come, to be passed in warm climates, to renovate his frame, and summers in cool ones to reinvigorate it; and now this man of immense wealth and high rank, who had never hitherto denied himself a gratification, however dearly it might be purchased at the expense of others, lay dead and unwept—his remains denied a lodgment even in any of the hotels which

when living he would have deemed unworthy of his presence. This, then, was the end of the selfish man! How unlike that of my sainted mother—loved and mourned by all who approached her! The lesson made a deep and lasting impression on my feelings, and I prayed that my end might not be like his.

After much exertion, Mr. Rivers succeeded in obtaining permission that the body of Lord Lymington might be lodged in the church until instructions should arrive from England for its removal to the family vault; but previously to its being removed to the church, the civil authorities at Calais, owing to the suddenness of the death, insisted on an autopsy taking place, *malgré* the representations of Mr. Rivers and Doctor Porson, who in vain explained the natural causes that led to the event. Then again arose the difficulty of where this operation was to be performed, all the innkeepers

declining to suffer the body to be conveyed into any one of their houses. At length, the dissecting-room in the hospital was selected; and to it the rough wooden shell, dignified by the name of *cercueil*, with its contents, was taken, followed only by Mr. Rivers, Doctor Porson, and myself; the faithful Dunington seizing the opportunity afforded by our absence of removing sundry boxes, with his name legibly inscribed on the tops, and addressed to his private residence in London. The other domestics could nowhere be found, they having accompanied the cook to a wine-shop, where he had promised to act as their interpreter, and procure some of the wine of his country, the privation of which, during many months in England, he had so often deplored.

Poor Lord Lymington! how would he have shrank with horror and disgust, could he have seen the place into which his re-

mains were conveyed, and the bearers, six dirty porters, who hurried on with it, passing jokes, and laughing all the way. Mr. Rivers, when the body was taken into the dissecting-room, attended by Doctor Porson, who, out of respect to the deceased, would not leave it until the *autopsy* was over, and the coffin finally fastened down, accompanied me to an hotel, where, having partaken of some refreshment, of which I stood much in need, I retired to a chamber, and sought repose.

CHAPTER IV.

I HAD slept some hours, for the late events had greatly agitated and fatigued me, when I was awoke by voices in the next room, from which mine was only divided by a thin wooden partition.

“ Have another bottle of wine, my friend,” said a voice that I instantly recognised to be Dunington’s.

“ No, no; not no more. I have had mooch, vera mooch, *mon cher ami*. You Engelish heads bear mooch wine, but we French cannot derink like you.”

"Psha'! another bottle will do you good; and I am so happy, I could drink half-a-dozen."

"You Engelish are so drole. You derink ven you are unhappy, to make you forget it; and ven you are appy, you derink also; always derink, *n'est-ce pas!*"

"Well, there is some truth in that, Mon-seer Vatlin, I must confess; but it is only natural that I should feel happy, for I am relieved from a service that I was heartily sick of; and egad, now it is over, I am surprised that I was able to stand it so long."

"Vy, *mon ami*, I always did tink you had a most capitalest place. De old lord vera rich—not look too close at de bills, nor forbid de per centage, eh?"

"Why, with regard to that, he was a strange mixture of extravagance and stinginess."

"Vat is steinginees? I know de extravagance vera vell, but not de oder."

“Stinginess means meanness.”

“Means meanness. Vat is dat? Two vords just de same. Your langage is vera poor, *mon cher*—vera poor, indeed.”

“As rich as yours, mounseer, any day in the week; and if it is not, what is the matter of that? We English are ten times as rich as you French—ay, that we are.”

“But your reeches, of which you alvays do talk so mooch, cannot make de amende for de poverte of your langage.”

“Nor the riches of *your* language make amends for the poverty of your purses, mounseer.”

“Vell, let us not quarille, *mon cher*, about de trifles, *mais revenons a nos moutons.*”

“We were not talking of mutton, my good friend;—we were talking of one, however, who is, thanks to my stars, as dead as mutton, as we say in England—the Right Hon. George Frederick Augustus Netherby,

Earl of Lymington; Viscount Highcastle, and Baron Valleyford, of Lymington Abbey, in the county of Salop; Highcastle in Warwickshire, and Valleyford Park, in the county of Notts; Custus Rotulorum; K.G., and G.C.B., as the peerage has it."

" Vy, *ma parole*, I never did hear so many names and so many places belonging to von man. He vera great personage ven alive, but now noting,—not even so good as you or me, for, as de book say, ‘dead lion not so good as living dog.’"

" He was no more of a lion, I can tell you, Mounseer Vatlin, than I am a dog, as you civilly were pleased to call me."

" No, I not call you dog. You not understand vot I say. I vont to tell dat de great man vonce he is dead, is not so good as de poor man who is alive; and I dare say your lord, wid so many names and so many places, vould be vera glad to give em all to be alive, as we are."

"I don't know about that; but I do know that he was always saying he was tired of his life, and did not know what to do to amuse himself. He expected other people to amuse him whether he was in the humour or not, though he soon threw a damp on their gaiety by his gloominess and ill temper. He was a precious old fool, to be sure, that he was! He expected his doctor to keep him well when he would overload his stomach in a manner enough to destroy the effect of all his prescriptions; and expected me to dress him up to look young, when he was spoiling his shape by injuring his worn-out constitution by over eating. He expected, too, that every handsome young creature he saw ought to fall in love with him; and, what was still as difficult, was to inspire a passion in his breast, in which no love, except for himself, ever entered. He cared for no living creature, yet was offended if he thought people did

not like him ; and when those who did not really know what a heartless creature he was, were inclined to pity his lonely state and low spirits, he would laugh in his sleeve, accuse them of having some design on him, and say all manner of spiteful things about them. He was as stupid as a goose, as cunning as a fox, as ostentatious as a spendthrift, and as mean as a miser. By flattering his vanity, which was so craving that he would swallow any compliment however gross, I could make him believe any tale I chose to invent against any of his acquaintances—for friends he had none ! In short, there was nothing I could not make him do, except what was good—and against that he had a natural objection. As all his mornings were spent in getting himself up to pass for a young man,—a labour that no one possessed of a single idea or feeling would have submitted to,—he could not, or at least would not, receive

visitors, lest the mysteries of his toilette should be exposed. Hence the whole of his day was spent with me, and as he never read a page, or had any rational occupation, he depended solely on me for getting through the long and, to me, weary hours while he was making up. Ah! Vatlin, if you knew what a tiresome task it is to try to amuse a person that can hardly be made to understand a joke, and yet expects to be amused! When tired of flattering him, and inventing all manner of stuff to tell him, I used to be obliged to collect all the gossip in the neighbourhood from the other servants."

"*Mais* he paid you well for your services, Monsieur Dunington, eh?"

"I took care of that, Mounseer, but if it had depended on him I should have got little, he was so stingy and sordid. Such, too, were his suspicions, that the most honest person could not have escaped his

mean surmises ; and so weak and silly, that the most clumsy trickster could have cheated him. He would dispute for sixpence, while he lavished thousands of pounds on follies, and grudged every shilling that was not spent on his own person, or for his own indulgence. He was always falling in love, or rather fancying that he was ; and while the fit lasted, which was never long, he was for marrying the object of his fancy ; but as it would by no means suit my purpose that he should have a wife to share, or perhaps to dispute, my influence over him, I took especial care to discover or invent some reason why he should not wed the person he had chosen, so marriage after marriage was broken off. He was frequently on the point of being brought into court for breach of promise, or of meeting manual chastisement from the male relatives of the jilted ladies, solely because *I*, John Dungington, Valet, did not choose that the Right

Honourable George Frederick Augustus Netherby, Earl of Lymington, Viscount Highcastle, and Baron Vallyford, should have a wife."

"Dis is strange, vera strange! Vat a fool dat lord, vid all dese fine names, moost be! You not find such a fool in all France, I can tell you, *mon cher!*"

"And not many in England, I do believe, Mounseer,—certainly not among noblemen or gentlemen of the right sort; but Lord Lymington was *not* of the right sort, which I soon discovered, and therefore took advantage of his weakness and badness."

"But you have saved moche money in his service, and those tings vat I helped you to send off dis day, make a fortune for you, *mon ami.*"

"Yes, not amiss—not amiss. And I have a round sum in the funds, and a good supply of plate laid by safe."

" He has, I suppose, left you an ample provision in his testament; *n'est-ce pas?*"

" Ay, there's the rub. Why, would you believe it, Vatlin, he was such a rogue and deceiver, that even in his will he has cheated those he pretended most to like?"

" I not onderstand, *mon ami*. How can a man *triche* in his *testament?*"

" He, however, found it easy enough, as you shall hear. He would say to whomever he intended to cheat, ' You will find, my good friend, that I have not forgotten you in my will.' He would even shew the person the passage in which a handsome sum was bequeathed to him, and thus win the regard and gratitude of the legatee. He would then add a codicil annulling the legacy, and giving as a reason for so doing some libel on the unfortunate person. By these pretended legacies, and by shewing them, he secured a number of complaisant friends and toad-eaters, who submitted to his ca-

prices and vices for sake of the expected legacies. Even ladies were the dupes of this treachery; the worthy and unworthy alike. Those whose virtue he could not corrupt, will find their reputations stained by his will; for having named in it large bequests, expressly to imply a more than ordinary attachment to have subsisted between them, he adds a codicil, assigning some insulting cause for cutting off the bequest. Consequently, those who had no claim on his generosity, and never dreamed of its being extended to them, will with horror find themselves brought before the public as legatees, and, in a codicil, cut off for some alleged or implied crime. I have seen him laughing like a fiend, when he was noting down these legacies, and then adding codicils to destroy them. Now, as I never thought that making a will was a laughing matter, I was rather curious to know what occasioned my hopeful lord and master to be

so merry with regard to his. I took, therefore the liberty of opening his *escrutoire* one night while he slept; and there, sure enough, I saw that, not satisfied with deceiving people while he lived, he determined that even after his death they should experience his power. You can't imagine, Vatlin, what I felt when I read the codicils. The handsome sum left me in the will was annulled, with some spiteful remark against me that would for ever prevent me getting another place, if I wanted one. I was so angry, that for a moment I was tempted to knock him on the head while he slept; but, on second thoughts, I determined to defeat his treachery—and I have succeeded!"

" *Bien fait, bien fait, mon ami. Mais,* how did you manage it?"

" Why, the very next day I told him that I was very sorry, but that I must leave his service. Now, as I knew that he would rather make any sacrifice than let me go, I

being in all the secrets of his making up, and, in fact, the person who made him up for the day, I was sure he would never consent to part with me. He appeared thunderstruck, and asked why I thought of such a thing. I said that an opportunity of making my fortune presented itself; for that a handsome and permanent independence had been offered to me, if I would enter the service of a Nabob, who being bent on marrying a young English wife, wished to be made to look as youthful as possible; and having heard of my talents, selected me to effect this change."

"But I have left you an ample provision in my will, Dunington," said he.

"Yes, my lord, I know it; but your lordship is still a young man, and may, and I hope will, live for many years, but the Nabob, to whom I told your lordship's bequest in your will, has offered to give me the same sum, in ready money, and to pay

me two hundred pounds a-year more than your lordship allows me, and your lordship cannot expect me to miss such a chance of bettering myself. To be sure, I would rather stay with your lordship, for it was a pleasure to me to make your lordship look as youthful as any young nobleman in England, seeing that your lordship is naturally such a handsome nobleman, whereas the old Nabob is not at all good-looking, and is much older than your lordship, so that it will cost me a deal of time and trouble to make him up to look like a handsome young gentleman. Nevertheless, I'll do it; and I'll be bound, before I have been with him a fortnight I'll turn him out in elegant style. The only thing that vexes me is, that this Nabob has seen your lordship, and admired you, as every one does when you are dressed for the day; and he fancies that he resembles your lordship, and would much more so, if dressed exactly like you. Now he

knows that I am the only person that can manage this, so that no money will keep him from engaging my services.

“ This last hint settled the business. He immediately came into my terms, gave me a check for a larger sum than he would have paid to redeem all the friends he ever had in his life from ruin; and thus I defeated his roguish scheme for cheating me in his will. Not only did I do this, but ever since he has been in such dread of losing me, that he has been afraid to inspect my accounts as strictly as formerly, which has given me the power of laying on pretty large additions to the bills, and making guineas where I previously only made shillings. So you see, Mounseer Vatlin, that we English are not such fools, after all, notwithstanding that you foreigners imagine that you have got all the cleverness to yourselves. Hah! hah! hah! There is one thing I forgot to tell you, and which is the best joke of all—

hah! hah! hah!—I can't keep from laughing when I think of it. My respectable lord and master had a mistress, a poor young woman, who being in poverty, was tempted to sell herself to age and infirmity for bread. Well, the fancy, like all his fancies, once gratified, was soon over, and this poor girl, and she is really a pretty woman, was left, unpitied and neglected, by this unfeeling old reprobate. We took a fancy to each other, and she became so fond of me that I had great difficulty in persuading her to remain with my lord. She has two fine children, as nice boys, and as like your humble servant as it is possible to be, and the old fool—hah! hah! hah!—imagines they are his, and has provided for them and their mother, whom I intend to marry as soon as I go back to England."

" Vell, never, no never, I heard such tings. Dis dead lord vera bad man, vera

bad indeed; not one such a *sans cœur* in all France."

" O, for the matter of that, Mounseer, I dare say that there's bad and good in all countries; so don't be for trying to persuade me that the old chap who has just kicked the bucket was any worse than many others of the same stamp in France."

CHAPTER V.

IN due course of time arrived one of the executors of the deceased lord, attended by a London undertaker and his assistant, in deep sables, and well supplied with all that was deemed necessary to do honour to the mortal remains of the late earl. A cedar shell lined with rich white satin, and having a mattrass and pillow of the same material, a leaden coffin, and a mahogany one, covered with crimson velvet, splendidly decorated with silver gilt ornaments, were borne in solemn state by the mutes in sables,

amidst the wondering and smiling crowd who flocked to the pier, and who jabbered that the *milor Anglois*, not satisfied with luxury in life, seemed desirous to transport it to the grave.

“ The worms,” said they, “ will pay no more respect to lords than to the poor; so *vive la gaieté!* The grave makes all equal. *Vive l'egalité!*”

Enough costly velvet, gilt nails, coronets, escutcheons, cushions with gold tassels, and all the other insignia peculiar to the funeral ceremonies of departed nobility, were landed, and consigned to the custom-house, as might have served to decorate the interment of some mighty sovereign; and the sum paid for duty for the entry of these gewgaws, destined to recross the same channel in three days after, might have maintained hundreds of the poor.

The executor, Mr. Sablethorpe, a proud and shy man, seemed by no means pleased

with the confidence reposed in him by the deceased earl, and left the entire arrangement of the ceremonials to the gentleman in sables and his satellites, who soon established themselves at the inn, under the auspices of the faithful Dunington, who already appeared to be on terms of the most familiar and friendly intercourse with them, and partook largely of the good things provided for their use. French wines were found too light and washy, as they termed it, for their palates; and, in lieu of them, sherry and port, *ad infinitum*, were put in requisition. The copious use of these beverages produced so exhilarating an effect on the gentlemen in sables, that their voices were heard loudly singing bacchanalian songs—their turbulent gaiety forming a striking contrast to the sombre hue of their garments.

Permission had been obtained by Mr. Rivers to have the mortal remains of Lord Lymington, after they were placed in the

aristocratic receptacles brought from London for the purpose, lodged within a church, which was soon draped with black by the undertaker and his assistants, when crowds flocked to behold the ostentatious exhibition.

Meanwhile, Mr. Sablethorpe, the executor, appointed two o'clock next day for the reading of the will; at which ceremony the presence of Dr. Porson, Mr. Rivers, and myself, was requested. The Doctor's countenance betrayed the hopes he indulged of having his services generously, if not munificently, rewarded by his late patient in the document about to be made known, and he indulged this hope the more sanguinely from the very limited yearly remuneration allowed him by the late lord. But I marked a smile of derision on the face of Dunington, as he noticed the Doctor's flushed cheeks when he received the summons to hear the will perused, which even had I not

heard him acknowledge to his crony, Vatlin, that he had secretly read it, would have led me to conclude that he was not ignorant of its contents, and that he knew a severe disappointment awaited the Doctor.

Mr. Sablethorpe received us with a dignified formality, pointed to us to be seated, drew forth a cambric handkerchief, sat down, blew his nose, cleared his throat, and having unfolded the will, which had been previously opened in London, proceeded to read it with due emphasis.

“ I, George Frederick Augustus Netherby, Earl of Lymington, Viscount Highcastle, and Baron Valleyford, of Lymington Abbey, in the county of Salop; Highcastle, in the county of Warwickshire; and Valleyford Park, in the county of Notts; and Grosvenor-square, in London, being in sound mind, though in weakly health, do hereby will and devise the whole of my estates, funded property, jewels, plate, books, furniture, &c.,

&c., to the persons to be named in this my last will and testament; and I hereby acknowledge this to be my last will, and revoke all other wills or codicils I may have made, or caused to be made. I bequeath my estate of Lymington Abbey to the Honourable John Witherington, commonly called Lord John Witherington, as a memorial of the long friendship that has subsisted between us, and to descend to the heirs male, lawfully begotten of the said John Witherington, commonly called Lord John Witherington. But in case of the said Lord John Witherington dying without male heirs lawfully begotten, then I bequeath the said estate of Lymington Abbey, after the decease of the said John Witherington, commonly called Lord John, to Thomas Cecil, Marquis of Mountincourt, and to revert to the male heir or heirs lawfully begotten of his body. I bequeath to my most esteemed and beloved friend, John Waldershaw, Esq., of Walder-

shaw Town, in the county of Bucks, and of Morlington, in the county of Durham, in proof of my affection for him, my estate of Higheastle, in the county of Salop; and my messuages, lands, and tenements in the said county, with all rents and arrears of rents that may be due at my decease, to have and to hold the same in trust for Mrs. Dorothy Tomkins, *alias* Moffat, for her sole and separate use, during the life of the said Dorothy Tomkins, *alias* Moffat, to revert at her death to George Fitzheny, Earl of St. Amand, and the heirs lawfully begotten of his body. And I bequeath to my esteemed friend, John Waldershaw, Esq., as a memorial of our long and uninterrupted friendship, the sum of fifty pounds, to buy a mourning ring. I bequeath to William Henry, Baron Stuteville, my estate of Valleyford Park, and in reversion to his heirs lawfully begotten of his body; but in case the said William Henry, Baron Stuteville

shall die without issue, I desire that the said estate of Valleyford Park revert to Jane Maria, Viscountess Wimbledon, for her sole and separate use, independent of her present or any future husband she may have. I desire that the portrait of the said Jane Maria, Viscountess Wimbledon, which will be found in my escrutoire, may be sent to the husband of the said Viscountess Wimbledon; and I desire that at her decease the said estate revert to her fourth son, George Frederick Augustus Acton. And I desire that at my death my executors deliver to the said Jane Maria, Viscountess Wimbledon, should she be then living, a box they will find directed to her; and should the said Jane Maria, Viscountess Wimbledon, be dead, I desire that the said box and its contents may be destroyed by my executors, without any examination of the contents of the same. I leave also unto the said Jane Maria, Viscountess Wimbledon, the sum of

five hundred pounds, to buy a mourning ring; and to her fourth son, George Frederick Augustus Acton, the half-length portrait of me, painted by the late Sir Joshua Reynolds. I bequeath to the Lady Mary Verener ten thousand pounds, for her sole and separate use, independent of her present or any future husband; and I desire that a red box, marked letters "M. V." may be sent to her. I bequeath to my friends Lord Grumblestone and Sir Edward Hawthornden, Bart., the sum of fifty thousand pounds, to be held in trust for Mrs. Anne Bloxham, otherwise Mullenger; to whom I also bequeath my star of the Order of St. Michael. I bequeath to my cousin, Gustavus Adolphus Netherby, the sum of twenty-five thousand pounds, and two of the pictures of my collection, to be selected by him. I bequeath to Miss Amelia Higginbotham the sum of thirty thousand pounds, and the small diamond necklace that be-

longed to my mother. To my faithful servant, John Dunington, I bequeath twenty thousand pounds, and the plainest of my tea-services in silver. I bequeath to Mrs. Olivia Cotsmere, fifty thousand pounds; and to each of her daughters, ten thousand pounds each, and the whole of my mother's diamonds (save and except the small necklace bequeathed to Miss Amelia Higginbotham), to be equally divided between the said Mrs. Olivia Cotsmere and her said daughters. To Dr. Porson I bequeath ten thousand pounds; and to each of my servants a year's wages. All the wines in my cellars I bequeath to Lord Bromptonville; and my plate and full-length portrait, by Romney, I bequeath to the Marchioness of Leominster, on condition that my arms are not to be effaced from the same. To Lord Grumblestone, Sir Edward Hawthornden, Bart., and Thomas Sablethorpe, Esq., my executors, I bequeath the sum of ten thousand pounds

each. Witness my hand and seal this tenth day of October, 1811.

LYMINGTON.

Witnessed by { ROBERT HEARNDALE,
HENRY PINCOTT.

Codicil.—I bequeath to Mrs. Olivia Cotsmere ten thousand pounds, exclusive of the fifty thousand pounds previously bequeathed to her.

LYMINGTON.

January 9th, 1813.

Codicil.—I bequeath to Amelia Higginbotham the sum of seven thousand pounds, exclusive of the thirty thousand pounds formerly bequeathed to her.

LYMINGTON.

Sept. 4th, 1813.

Codicil.—I revoke the bequest of twenty-five thousand pounds to my cousin, Gus-

tavus Adolphus Netherby, for his refusal to associate with my friend Mrs. Olivia Cotsmere and her amiable daughters.

LYMINGTON.

April 7th, 1814.

Codicil.—I annul the bequests made to my servant, John Dunington, I having already liberally remunerated his services.

LYMINGTON.

June 13th, 1814.

Codicil.—Having had reason to be dissatisfied with the persons named in my will, and entertaining a bad opinion of them, I revoke all bequests made to them both in my will or the codicils since made, and bequeath my whole fortune in landed estates, funded property, jewels, plate, wines, books, pictures, marbles, and furniture, to Mrs. Anne Bloxham, otherwise Mullinger, and her two infant sons, baptized, the elder,

George Frederick Netherby, and the second, Augustus Henry Netherby, each of whom, on reaching his majority, is to receive an allowance of ten thousand a year, and at their mother's death, the reversion of the property bequeathed to her, which is to be equally divided between them.

LYMINGTON.

March 4th, 1815.

Witnessed by { THOMAS WINNINGTON.
CHARLES COTTENHAM."

Never shall I forget the countenance of poor Doctor Porson, as he listened to the reading of the will, in the monotonous tone of Mr. Sablethorpe. When the bequest of ten thousand pounds to himself was read, his face brightened up, his chest seemed to expand, and his whole aspect changed, and continued to bear the impression of happiness. But when the revocation of all the bequests in the will was pronounced in the

last of the codicils, he became deadly pale, and his whole appearance underwent a total revolution, gloom and dismay clouding his countenance, while his hands were involuntarily clasped convulsively together. A malicious smile played around the lips of Dunington, but at the reading of the last codicil, bequeathing the whole of Lord Lymington's fortune to Mrs. Anne Bloxham, otherwise Mullinger, his eyes sparkled, his cheeks flushed, and his lips distended, with a joy too powerful to be concealed, although it was evident he wished to repress its exhibition.

“ This is a curious will,” said Mr. Sablethorpe, wiping his face with his cambric handkerchief, and folding up the parchment. “ I was not aware that the deceased Earl had any attachment, or any family. This said Mrs. Anne Bloxham, otherwise Mullinger, is now about the most wealthy

woman—lady, I meant to say—in England, if not in Europe."

Dunington rubbed his hands, and seemed longing to say, "and this wealthy lady will be my wife, and her sons are mine!"

Two days after the reading of the will, the body of Lord Lymington was removed to England for interment, attended by Mr. Sablethorpe, Dr. Porson, Dunington, the cook, footmen, undertaker, and his sable assistants, followed to the pier at Calais by an immense crowd of idlers, attracted by the ostentatious display of the funeral procession.

Mr. Rivers decided on our remaining at Calais until he had consulted Lord Warminster, my only surviving guardian, as to his wishes relative to my future movements; and now left to ourselves, my preceptor failed not to draw my attention to the effects of self-indulgence and egotism, as ex-

emplified in the case of Lord Lymington, whose life was spent in sensuality, and whose noble fortune, instead of doing good, had only ministered to his evil passions, and would now only enrich the unworthy.

CHAPTER VI.

IN due time came a letter from Lord Warminster, authorizing Mr. Rivers to conduct me to any part of the Continent he thought fit, and to remain abroad as long as he deemed it necessary for my bodily or mental improvement. His letter concluded by hinting that “the delicacy of his health precluded him from taking any personal part with regard to his ward, and that he hoped Mr. Rivers would give him as little trouble as possible on the subject.”

Lucky was it for me that my preceptor

was worthy the confidence reposed in him by my sole surviving guardian—a confidence not founded on any knowledge of Mr. Rivers's character or conduct, of which he was totally ignorant, but proceeding wholly from his perfect indifference towards the ward forced on his notice, and in whose fate and fortunes he was determined to take as little interest or trouble as possible. He referred Mr. Rivers to his solicitors, Messrs. Newcull and Bracebridge, of Lincoln's Inn, to whom he had assigned the management of his guardianship, and with whom Mr. Rivers was to communicate whenever occasion required.

We remained at Paris some weeks, and made the tour of the South of France, the climate of which soon re-established my health. We visited Nismes, and examined its precious antiquities—the Maison Carrée, Amphitheatre, Gate of Augustus, Temple of Diana, and La Tour Maine; the history of

each and all my preceptor explained to me with an erudition worthy of ears more capable of appreciating it than mine then were; for Mr. Rivers was not more deeply versed in the science *de bouche* than in that of architecture and antiquity, both of which he had studied *con amore*. From Nismes we proceeded to Arles, saw its Amphitheatre and Museum, and then went to St. Remy; near to which stand the Triumphal Arch and Mausoleum, so justly celebrated. We then pursued our route to Italy, where three years passed happily and fleetly, engaged in classical pursuits and researches; in which we were assisted by some of the learned friends of Mr. Rivers, with whom he had formed acquaintance during his previous *séjour* there. Accustomed to the society of persons so much older than myself, I then imbibed that taste for sober and rational conversation, which has never since left me; and that love for reading which still forms

the greatest pleasure of my life, and renders me, though not averse from, independent of society. Mr. Rivers had wished me to enter college, but to this step I entertained so insuperable an objection that he ceased to urge its adoption, and contented himself with devoting his whole time and thoughts to the development of my mind, and the storing it with information and instruction. The hours spent in our rides and walks were never wasted in idle talk, or common-place observations. He would direct our rambles to some spot rendered remarkable by historical association, and drawing forth from his pocket the book that related the event, he would read it aloud to me, while my eyes dwelt on the objects around—objects, particularly those of nature, little changed from the period in which the incidents he perused had occurred. We read the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire at Rome, and

often visited the sites referred to by the historian. But while making me appreciate the vast learning, laborious research, and patient investigation of Gibbon, he taught me to disapprove the sneering scepticism of the free-thinker, and the sarcasms aimed by him at revealed religion. Mr. Rivers possessed that most inestimable blessing, a happy temperament, which, while it made him satisfied with himself, disposed him to be so towards others, and rendered him a cheerful and entertaining companion. We lived on the most cordial terms; for no pedantic air of superiority ever marked his manner when correcting an erroneous opinion, or laying open the vast stores of information he had acquired. Those were happy days, and I felt that they were so, even while enjoying them; but their calm and sober happiness was not long to last. The gusts of passion were now about to

ruffle the even tenour of that life which had, during the last three years, rolled on smoothly if not happily.

Anxious to see the celebrated temples at Pæstum, Mr. Rivers and I left Naples, and devoted the first day of our journey to viewing Nocera, the Nuceria of the ancients, and its church of Santa Maria Maggiore. The knowledge of Mr. Rivers in antiquarian lore not only relieved me from the prosy and illiterate explanations of the ignorant cicerone, but enabled me to judge of the different hypotheses relative to the original use of this building, now dedicated to Divine worship. I leaned to that which supposes it to have been a temple, although the octagon basin in the centre, surrounded by eight small marble columns, has led some antiquarians to imagine it to have been a bath. The columns of oriental alabaster and *verd antique* that decorate the church are of rare beauty, and vouch for the grandeur of Nu-

ceria when they were erected. We saw the ruins of the castle from which the proud and vindictive Urban VI. fulminated his excommunications against the besieging Neapolitan army, commanded by Otho of Brunswick, fourth husband of Jane of Naples, the first queen of that name.

We proceeded, the next day, to La Cava, the situation of which is truly romantic, and the town itself, with its arcaded street, is at once neat and picturesque. The environs at every turn of the road reminded us of the pictures of Salvator Rosa, many of which are faithful copies of the wild and beautiful scenery around us, among which he is said to have loved to wander.

As we paused before a rude cliff overhanging the sea, above which rose a huge and distorted trunk of a tree, whose leafless branches were widely extended, Mr. Rivers observed that it only wanted a brigand or two to render this picture a complete Sal-

vator Rosa one. "I'll be sworn I've seen this identical spot on his canvas," continued he.

Scarcely had he ceased speaking, when female cries were heard, and in another moment a boat, hitherto unseen, was rowed from out a cavern in the rocks beneath us, in which a youthful and slight girl was forcibly held down by a man; while two others plied their oars, and impelled the boat rapidly along. The cries of the girl became fainter every moment, as the bark receded from the shore; but not so those of a woman, whose piercing shrieks seemed to come from the cavern which the boat had quitted.

"There is some foul play here, I am persuaded," said Mr. Rivers; "let us endeavour to reach the cavern."

We soon discovered some rude steps cut in the rock, and descending them as quickly as we could, and not without considerable

personal risk, we reached the cavern, to which we were guided by the cries of a woman, whom we found extended on the sandy floor of a large natural grotto, her hands and feet tied by ropes. To release her was the work of a few minutes, and while doing so, we gathered from her wild and incoherent ravings, that while she and a young lady she named as Mademoiselle Selina, were seated in the grotto, the latter engaged in drawing, a boat approached the entrance, out of which three men jumped, one of whom seized her *chère demoiselle*, while the other two had, in spite of all her resistance, thrown her on the earth, and tied her in the savage manner we had found her, of the cruelty of which her arms bore evidence.

“ *O, ma chère demoiselle, ma chère et belle demoiselle!*” exclaimed she, while tears flowed abundantly down her flushed cheeks. “ Look, here is her *esquisse*, her vat you call drawing. See how beautiful it

is. *O, mon Dieu, ayez pitié, de moi et rendez moi ce cher ange!*"

We now learned that this poor woman was the governess of "Mademoiselle Selina," that they had been residing for some weeks at La Cava, and had occasionally, by the desire of her "*pauvre cher ange*," explored the picturesque sites and natural grottos in the neighbourhood; Mademoiselle making drawings of those which most pleased her. The one before us was an admirable sketch, and proved, not only the talent of the young lady, but the excellence of the master who had cultivated it. To Mr. Rivers's questions as to who the man was who had carried off the young lady, or what his motive could be, the Frenchwoman replied, that she had occasionally seen him, within the last four days, loitering about, but had no idea who he could be. She stated that he was a man of about

forty-eight or fifty, of very dark complexion, and with a peculiarly bad countenance.

“ Was he at all known to Mademoiselle ?” asked Mr. Rivers.

“ Not von bit in de vorld,” answered the weeping Frenchwoman.

“ Has Mademoiselle no parents, no brother ?” inquired Mr. Rivers.

“ *Helas!* she have von fader, who is not like von fader. He not lof her moch. *malgré* she is von *ange de beauté et de bonté!*”

“ You surely are not without some protector at La Cava, or, at least, a male servant ?” demanded Mr. Rivers.

“ Ve have von *femme de chambre et valet*; but, *malheureusement*, ve did send him to Naples dis morning to de *banquier* for money, which is de raison ve come here alone; every oder day he follow our steps.”

We advised the Frenchwoman to return

with us as rapidly as she could to her lodging; and proposed that we should dispatch a man on horseback to Salerno, another to Amalfi, a third to Castellamare, a fourth to Sorento, and a fifth to Naples, to convey information of the abduction to the civil authorities, and to have the police sent in pursuit of the fugitives. Mr. Rivers wrote to the English minister at Naples to report the fact, a step he thought it right to take, when informed by the old Frenchwoman that her *chère demoiselle*, though brought up in France, was English.

“What is the young lady’s name?” inquired Mr. Rivers.

“Somers—Miss Selina Somers,” replied the *gouvernante*.

Before leaving the grotto, I found an opportunity, when unobserved, of seizing a glove that had been left near the drawing of Miss Somers; and furtively concealing it in my breast, I felt as if I had possessed

myself of a treasure. The drawing I would also gladly have appropriated to myself, but Madame de Stourville — for so was the Frenchwoman named—took it, and, pressing it to her lips, again renewed her tears. See her litteel foot, vat litteel mark .it make in de sand," said she, pointing to the impression of foot-marks, which, as she justly observed, must have been made by little feet; for the fabled slipper of Cinderella was larger then the small shoes that left the marks before us. How I longed to examine the glove in secret, and see if the hand accorded with the delicacy of the feet, as indicated by the impressions in the sand! Oh! youth, ever prone to love, how quickly is the imagination enlisted to form idols for the heart to worship! Already did mine throb more rapidly; and for one whose face was unknown to me, whose very name I had only learned a few minutes before, and of whose person I knew nothing,

except that her foot-marks and glove were the smallest I had ever seen, and that her *gouvernante* pronounced her to be “*un ange*.” But then, how many *gouvernantes* had I not, during my stay in Florence and Rome, in the presence of their *élèves*, or the parents of their *élèves*, heard call their young ladies beautiful, charming, &c., when the said young ladies possessed not a single claim to merit such commendations. Yet there was something that whispered to me that *this gouvernante* spoke the truth; for nothing less than extreme amiability, joined to beauty, could have rendered Madame de Stourville so fondly attached to Miss Somers, as her deep grief at her loss proved her to be. It might have been, perhaps, the romantic incident of the young lady being forcibly carried off, that excited this sudden passion in my youthful breast—the first that had ever yet ruffled its happy calm; for, unlike the generality of persons of my age, I had

never experienced any of the boyish flames lighted by pretty *femmes de chambres*, *piquantes grisettes*, or smiling retailers of gloves and watch-ribbons, who make such havoc on the hearts of school-boys and young collegians. No, the refinement and exquisite charm of my poor dear lost mother's manners and sentiments had created such an indelible impression on my mind, that I shrank from coarse associations; and a pretty face, or well-turned figure, if accompanied by vulgarity, had no attraction for me. This first idol, therefore, found the temple in which I was ready to enshrine her unprofaned. No incense had ever burned there before; no pæans had ever echoed there for another. And she was borne from me by rude hands—was exposed to insult, to violence,—and I was powerless to save her,—might never see her more! I tried to stretch my imagination into the belief that her form and face had been re-

vealed to me, as struggling with the dark stranger I saw her white drapery agitated, and heard her vain shrieks for help during the brief interval before the boat had disappeared. But still I had no distinct notion of her, and therefore was compelled to accept as fact Madame de Stourville's vague assertion that she was an angel. A woman's shriek I had never previously thought could be harmonious; but hers seemed still to ring in my ears, and to possess a peculiar charm. Nevertheless, on reflection, I could not precisely remember whether it had made this impression on me when I had actually heard it, or whether I fancied that it was replete with music, when I listened to the *gouvernante's* declaration of her perfections, and beheld the fairy-like footsteps imprinted on the sand.

Madame de Stourville, supported by Mr. Rivers and me, and still weeping and trembling with emotion, at length reached

her abode. It was a simple but neat dwelling, scrupulously clean. Books, a guitar, drawings, and an abundance of flowers, were its chief ornaments, and seemed to constitute the occupations of its late inmate. A fresh gush of tears fell from the eyes of Madame de Stourville as she entered the little sitting-room, only left three hours before with her *chère demoiselle*, and which so forcibly reminded her of that young lady. She sobbed aloud, as her eyes turned to the drawings scattered on a table near the window; the guitar with a sheet of music laid by it, and some delicate needle-work half finished.

There is something peculiarly attractive to men of refinement in the sight of the chamber of a young and pure-minded woman —that chamber in which her innocent avocations are pursued, her gentle thoughts indulged, her half-formed hopes cherished, and her prayers to the Deity offered up. The one in which we now stood seemed invested at

least with sanctity; and Mr. Rivers, as he glanced on the Bible, placed apart on a small table, with its neatly-stitched velvet case, whispered to me, “The presence of this sacred book assures me that the young person who has so strongly excited our interest is worthy of it.”

I could have embraced him for having said this, as I fancied it was a tacit permission to love the unknown who had already made so deep an impression on my imagination, if not on my heart. Madame de Stourville observing Mr. Rivers regarding the holy volume, said, “Yes, that book she read every day; and while she did so, I loved to look on her beautiful face, which resembled a Madonna of Raffaele, so angelic was its character and expression. *Ah! ma belle et bonne Mademoiselle Selina!*—who could have believed that she would have thus been torn from me!”

The English minister at Naples imme-

diately took up the case of Miss Somers, and instituted the strictest search for her; but several days passed without bringing any tidings; and the alarm and anxiety of Madame de Stourville increased to such a degree, that her health evidently began to suffer. Mr. Rivers had so much compassion for the poor woman, that he postponed our departure until she should become better; and her entreaties to us not to desert her were so urgent, that his humanity and good nature disposed him to comply with her reiterated request. Madame de Stourville sometimes thought of proceeding to Naples, there to await the result of the search making in every direction for her fair *élève*; but then came the reflection, that should a possibility exist of Miss Somers escaping, she would assuredly direct her flight to La Cava, and not finding her *gouvernante* there, would be at a loss to know whither to proceed—a reflection that decided her to

remain where she was. My anxiety about the fair unknown knew no bounds. I would wander by the sea-shore, watching every boat that approached, in the vain hope that it might contain her, or at least bring some tidings of her fate. What that fate might be, I trembled to think; for the most fearful presentiments filled my mind by day, and haunted my dreams by night, banishing every other thought. Yet a feeling, scarcely definable even to myself, prevented me from acknowledging the powerful interest excited by Miss Somers; and so great was my reserve on this point, that Mr. Rivers more than once accused me of indifference to the subject which occupied all my thoughts, and imagined that the gloom which weighed me down proceeded from my dissatisfaction at being detained so long at such a dull place as La Cava.

CHAPTER VII.

WE had almost ceased to hope for intelligence, the efforts of the English minister and the Neapolitan police having failed to procure any, when I observed, as I sat on a rock by the sea-shore, a small boat approaching, rowed by two fishermen, in which a figure, wrapped in a dark cloak, was seated. As the boat neared the shore, I advanced, as I had frequently done on previous occasions, and stood on the spot where it was evident the men intended to land. I felt unusually agitated, and could with difficulty

restrain myself from hailing them; but when, having pushed the boat on shore, one of them assisted the person wrapped in the cloak to land, and I saw the delicate feet of a woman, although the rest of the person was concealed, I could no longer resist exclaiming, "Do I indeed behold Miss Somers!"

"Yes, that is my name," was pronounced in the most dulcet accents that had ever before blessed my ears; "and as you know me, can you tell me where is Madame de Stourville?"

"Let me conduct you to her," said I, offering my arm, which she seemed inclined to accept; but the two boatmen, civilly, but firmly, declared that they would be her escort until they had safely lodged her with the signora to whom she belonged. They did not, however, object to my walking by the side of one of them, Miss Somers walking between the two.

"You must not feel offended," said she,

"at the determination of my humble but worthy protectors to resign me only to my friend, Madame de Stourville. They have rescued me from the cruel man who forced me from my *gouvernante*, and have treated me with a kindness and humanity for which I must ever be grateful."

The peasant-cloak in which Miss Somers was enveloped allowed little of her form to be seen, and concealed nearly the whole of her face; but her beautiful eyes sparkled beneath the hood that shrouded her countenance, and would have rendered any face lovely. When we approached near the cottage inhabited by Madame de Stourville, Miss Somers, with a thoughtfulness not often to be found in persons so young, suggested the propriety of my going on to announce her return to Madame de Stourville, lest that kind friend might suffer from the agitation likely to be produced by the sudden apparition of her *élève*. I hurried on to

the house, and notwithstanding that I endeavoured to assume a calm and collected air, Madame de Stourville, on looking at me, exclaimed, “*Ah, mon Dieu!* he has heard something of *ma chère mademoiselle!* *Oui, oui,* he has, I am *convaincue*, heard news of joy!”

“ You are right, madam, in your suppositions,” said I. “ I have good news to communicate. Miss Somers is safe!”

“ *Mon Dieu! mon Dieu! je vous remercie!*” exclaimed the *gouvernante*, falling on her knees, with her eyes filled with tears of joy and gratitude, while she fervently prayed for a few minutes. She arose, tremulous with emotion, and asked whether she could not go to her *chère demoiselle*.

“ There is no occasion,” answered I, “ for Miss Somers will soon be here.”

“ *Est-il possible? O quel bonheur, quel bonheur, mais quand sera-t-elle ici?*” exclaimed she.

"In a few minutes you will see her," said I.

The good-hearted Frenchwoman ran and embraced me, then repeated the same ceremony to Mr. Rivers, and flew to the door, at which Miss Somers and her two self-constituted guardians at that moment presented themselves. It would be a difficult task to describe the exuberant joy of Madame de Stourville, exhibited by alternately embracing her charming *élève*, bursting into tears, expressing the most fervent ejaculations of thanks to Providence, and to the two boatmen who, under its divine instigation, had rescued her.

Mr. Rivers and I were presented to the young lady by her *gouvernante*, with flattering eulogiums on the kindness we had exercised towards her when overwhelmed with alarm and grief at the *enlèvement* of her *cher ange*; she would, she declared, without our pity and good nature, have gone mad.

Vainly would my pen essay to paint the rare beauty of Miss Somers. Never had I beheld so lovely a face, or so faultless a figure. Even Mr. Rivers, the cold and reasonable Mr. Rivers, was astonished at the pre-eminent loveliness of this charming young creature. Her face was of a perfect oval, the features exquisitely chiselled, her complexion delicately fair, and her small, but full lips, of a rich crimson tint, made it look still fairer. Her eyes were of a deep blue, and the dark fringe that shaded their snowy lids, as well as the beautifully defined brows, of a silky texture almost approaching to black, rendered her countenance peculiarly striking. Her hair, of a golden brown, and parted, *à la Madonna*, on her finely sculptured forehead, was bound round the back of her small and exquisitely formed head. Her throat was white as milk, this simple simile offering the only image that at once gives a notion of its softness and purity.

Her bust and waist were of admirable proportions, slight, yet rounded, and possessing that flexibility and grace so rarely found united; and her hands and feet might have served as models to the finest sculptor. Her smile was irresistible, and betrayed teeth, small, even, and white as pearls; for however hacknied the comparison may be, I can find no other that would be applicable to them. If before I had seen Miss Somers I had allowed my imagination, if not my heart, to be so touched by her fancied charms, what must have been my feelings when I now beheld her, far, oh! how infinitely superior to the fairest dream I had ever indulged about her! I could have knelt and worshipped her, as I drank in large draughts of love from her wondrous beauty, and listened to the dulcet sounds of her matchless voice. I was confused—bewildered—speechless!

“ Vy, you say noting, noting at all in

all dis joy ; you not welcome *ma chère demoiselle, Monsieur?*" said Madame de Stourville, having noticed with surprise my stupidity.

Miss Somers looked towards me, and whether she guessed that my embarrassment proceeded from any cause rather than indifference, or that the natural modesty and reserve of her nature led to it, I could not pretend to say, but a bright blush rose to her delicate cheeks as she met my gaze, and in an instant her long dark eye-lashes were cast down, as if to conceal the beauteous suffusion.

It was some time before the exuberant joy of Madame de Stourville permitted Mr. Rivers to question either Miss Somers or her rescuers relative to her escape. When at length the good lady became more calm, Miss Somers told us that she was conveyed to the Island of Ischia, before landing at which, the person who had forcibly carried

her from La Cava, declared to her that if she attempted to denounce him, or claim protection from any one they might chance to meet, he would inflict the heaviest punishment on her, as she was now wholly in his power. This person she described as being rather good-looking than otherwise. He had mustachios, a long beard, and large whiskers. He was tall and athletic, spoke Italian fluently, but with a foreign accent, and seemed of a brutal nature, for he aggravated her terrors by the unmanly threats he had made use of to her. It was clear that he had represented her to the two boatmen whom he had employed as his wife, who had eloped from him with an admirer; for he frequently addressed them with remarks on the sinfulness of so young a creature having broken her marriage vows, and having left so good and indulgent a husband as he professed himself to have been. He prepared them for her denial of this state-

ment, by saying that, although so youthful, she was so hardened a sinner, that she would deny being his wife, and that he feared she was irreclaimable. When she, shocked at this falsehood, declared her innocence, and asserted that she had never previously seen him, he turned up his eyes, and said to the men, “ You see, my friends, it is as I told you, she is utterly callous and hardened.” On landing, she was hurried through vineyards and by-paths, the three men guarding her, and avoiding the hamlets that lay in their route, until they reached a lone house, inhabited by a very deaf old man, with whom, it appeared, the individual who had carried off Miss Somers had been lodging some weeks.

“ You see I have brought away my wife,” bellowed he; but it was not until he had three times repeated them that his host could hear them. Miss Somers was led up stairs to an humble, but clean, room,

the windows of which were secured by iron bars, and the door by strong bolts on the exterior. In it she found a change of clothes, of a plain and homely kind, such as are worn by the female peasants in the environs of Naples, and which her persecutor told her she was to put on next day. He then placed some bread, grapes, and water, in the room, left her, carefully securing the fastenings of the door, the key of which he took with him, and having remained some time in an adjoining chamber, she heard him descend the stairs, and soon after leave the house. As the heavy door clapped after him, she ran to the window, and saw, to her surprise, that his appearance was totally changed. No longer did he wear the mustachios, huge whiskers, long beard, and elfin locks, which she had seen so short a time before, and which it was now evident he had used as a disguise. So great an alteration did their absence produce on

his appearance, that it was only by a peculiarity in his gait that she was able to recognise him. His dress too was wholly different, for now it was that of a gentleman; but his face she could not see, as his back was turned towards her, although she watched him until his figure was lost in the distance. The house remained perfectly quiet for the rest of the evening. She heard the old man fasten the windows and doors, and then all was silent, and she addressed herself to the Almighty to pray for protection under the trials to which she had been so unexpectedly exposed.

“ I prayed for you too, dear Madame de Stourville,” said the charming girl; “ a stranger, and left alone, your poor Selina snatched away from you! and Heaven be praised, my prayers were not heard in vain; for I find God has raised up for you kind friends to console and aid you in my absence. Two days passed before I again saw that

dreaded man. When he entered my chamber, he had resumed the mustachios, whiskers, beard, and elfin locks, and his countenance was even more ferocious than before. I ventured to expostulate with him, and to implore to be restored to my *gouvernante*. But he only mocked my supplications, laid down a fresh supply of bread, grapes, and water, left the room, securing the door as before; and soon after I heard him leave the house, and, as on the former occasion, shorn of his locks, moustachios, whiskers, and beard."

A week rolled away in this manner. O! what long dull days were those! Every second day this hateful man returned to supply me with fresh provisions, and at each visit he observed the same precautions as before; but seemed still more moody and savage in his humour. The day after his last visit, I, for the first time since my arrival, heard strange voices in the house.

I became dreadfully alarmed, concluding that my persecutor had returned with some of his creatures to take me away to some new and worse prison, when a pebble was thrown against my window; and on approaching it, judge of my surprise and joy when I beheld the two boatmen who had several times rowed you and me, my dear Madame de Stourville, in our little excursions here. They instantly recognised me, and immediately set about forcing open the door of my prison—a task they found more difficult than they expected. O! how I trembled lest that fearful man should arrive before they had accomplished it; but, fortunately, this did not occur, and in a quarter of an hour I saw the door fall to pieces before the vigorous blows of my deliverers. I then learnt that they were two brothers, nephews to the deaf old man, who had been imposed on by the falsehoods of my enemy. Having taken a holiday to visit their uncle, they found that he had a lodger, and by

inquiries ascertained that a young woman was a prisoner in the chamber above. Coupling this information with the fact of my having been forcibly carried off from La Cava, it instantly occurred to them that the prisoner might be no other than me; and having ascertained this fact, they determined to rescue me, and restore me to my dear Madame de Stourville. The old man, fearful of the vengeance of my persecutor, accompanied his nephews and me to the priest's house, in the next hamlet, where we left him; and my rescuers, having placed me in their boat, wrapped me in a cloak borrowed from a servant of the priest, brought me safe to you, dear, dear friend!" and thus saying, she again embraced Madame de Stourville.

The worthy boatmen were liberally rewarded, but the money bestowed seemed to give them much less pleasure than the happiness they saw they had conferred on us all. Mr. Rivers sent off letters to the

English minister at Naples, and to the head of the police there, acquainting them with what had occurred, and urging the necessity of discovering and arresting the monster who had planned and carried this vile plot into execution. In the meanwhile, Mr. Rivers proposed—and I could have embraced him for it—that we should both sit up in the house, with three or four trustworthy peasants, to be selected by our friendly boatmen, and that the next day we should escort the ladies to Naples, where he wished to place them under the especial protection of the English minister.

“ We will then return,” said he, addressing me, “ and pursue our original project of visiting the celebrated Temples of Pæstum.”

“ And must we, dear Madame de Stourville, abandon our plan of visiting these famous temples, which I have so long desired to see?” said Miss Somers.

"Not if dem kind gentlemen who were so good to me will permit us to accompany dem dere," replied the *gouvernante*.

"The country around Pæstum is lonely, and not the safest in the world for ladies," observed Mr. Rivers; "and moreover, should the ruffian who has already occasioned so much alarm to this young lady, discover that you were gone there, who knows but that he might be tempted to take advantage of so wild a region, and again endeavour to get Miss Somers into his power?"

"But we will have pistols," said I. "We can send off our servant to Naples at day-break, and he can bring us additional firearms, and an additional servant or two, which, with that of the ladies, will form an escort that will deter any attempt on the part of the wretch in question."

I felt my cheeks glow and my stature expand at the thought of yielding protection to the lovely girl before me. She seemed

pleased with my eagerness to secure her the pleasure she anticipated in joining our party to Pæstum, and repaid me with a smile that I should have deemed a sufficient reward for any service. My proposal was accepted; our servant received orders to set off to Naples at daybreak, and we were to leave La Cava for Salerno as soon as he returned. The ladies retired to their bed-rooms at an early hour, and we bivouacked on sofas in the sitting-room, having our pistols loaded, ready at hand, in case of attack.

“There is something incomprehensible to me in all this affair,” said Mr. Rivers, as we sat conversing after the departure of the ladies. “That a young person of such remarkable beauty, and apparently so very amiable, should be allowed to travel about in Italy without any male protector is most extraordinary; and that a father should be so careless of such a treasure is not less sin-

gular and suspicious. The *gouvernante* seems to be a kind-hearted, worthy woman, devoted to her *élève*, but is evidently unfit to be her sole protectress in so lawless a country as this. The forcible abduction, too, and by a person totally unknown to them, is strange. Nothing like professions of love have been made to Miss Somers, in extenuation of the violence offered to her; consequently, I am wholly at a loss to account for the motive that actuated a deed, which the great beauty of the young lady might cause, though it would not justify."

The night passed without any alarm; and when morning came, we retired to the little inn where we had taken up our abode on arriving at La Cava. Having refreshed ourselves by a bath, dressed, and finished our simple breakfast, we returned to the lodgings of Madame de Stourville and Miss Somers, whom we found seated at theirs. There is no light more trying to female

beauty than that of early morn, when a clear and bright atmosphere betrays every defect of complexion, and every imperfection of feature. Miss Somers, however, might well bid defiance to the broadest glare of sunshine in which beauty ever basked, and looked transcendently lovely when we entered; her frame refreshed by a night of calm and uninterrupted repose, and her mind restored to its wonted equanimity by finding herself again with her affectionate *gouvernante*. I thought—but it might only be fancy—that her cheek assumed a brighter hue as we entered; but what will not a youth in love for the first time fancy when hope aids vanity? Her dress, too, although simple, was exceedingly elegant, and testified that some pains had been taken in its arrangement. How completely does her attire reveal the character as well as taste and refinement of a woman. A meretricious style may sometimes be becoming to

those more remarkable for a certain showy, flaunting kind of good looks, owing their *éclat* more to a high colour, large dark eyes, and a tolerably white skin, than to delicacy of feature or purity of expression; but such women are to real beauties what dahlias are to moss-roses, only looked at with pleasure when the latter cannot be seen. Every moment brought to view some new charm in Miss Somers, owing to the varying expression of her countenance and the exquisite gracefulness of her movements; and as I looked at her, I was reminded of the verses of the old poet—"It might be said her body thought," so sentient did hers appear in all its slight but rounded symmetry. Her soft and glossy hair was braided round the back of her small and finely-turned head, and the shining tresses that were divided on her snowy temples, heightened by their contrast the transparent fairness of her complexion. Her eyes, now restored to their

pristine lustre, were by far more beautiful than on the previous day, and sparkled with animation or languished beneath their fringed lids with a dove-like softness. Her waist, round and symmetrical, was confined by a pale blue ribbon, and a knot of a similar hue fastened the lace collar that encircled her milk-white throat. Her hands were delicate, plump, and fair as those of a child; and oh! how I longed to press them within mine, and to kiss those small taper fingers, with their pink-coloured nails, which resembled those roseate little shells found on the sea-shore. But if I was fascinated by the rare beauty of Miss Somers, how was the fascination enhanced by the charms of her conversation and the graces of her manner! Her voice too, low, sweet, and harmonious, was in itself an irresistible attraction, and lent increased interest to every sentiment she uttered.

The day was whiled away in rambling

around the romantic environs of La Cava, Miss Somers leading us to her favourite haunts. She shuddered when we passed near the grotto whence she had been carried off; and Madame de Stourville absolutely trembled with alarm, while declaring that her *chère et belle Mademoiselle* must not enter it again.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE next day we left La Cava for Salerno, Madame de Stourville and her lovely *élève* travelling in their post chariot, attended by a *femme de chambre* and man servant; Mr. Rivers and myself in a travelling carriage, and two men servants on the box, keeping close to the chaise of the ladies. Never before had I found the society of Mr. Rivers irksome; but now my mind was so wholly engrossed by one object that I was scarcely sensible of his presence, and little profited by his instructive conversation.

The scenery from La Cava to Salerno is beautiful, and the day was just such a one as is most suited to similar expeditions. Innumerable flights of pigeons were winging their way from those tall and slender towers erected for their dwellings along the hills to the left of our route, and as their snowy wings wafted them through the clear air, the bright blue sky forming a background, they added to the beauty of the scene.

O Love! in what trifles canst thou find delight, and how slight a favour from a pure and refined woman can confer happiness on a lover! A glance, a smile, a word, or a blush, can transport him, and these favours are the more prized from the reserve and delicacy of her who accords them. I felt this when Miss Somers accepted the wild flowers I gathered for her on the way-side, and repaid the simple offering with a smile full of sweetness.

Arrived at Salerno, and lodged in its best *locando*, fronting the beautiful bay, which nearly equals that of Naples, after dinner we sauntered forth to explore the objects most worthy of attention in the environs. Placed at the foot of the lofty Gragnano, and bathed by the blue waters of the Mediterranean, Salerno presents a charming picture. The romantic ruins of a fortress crown the summit of a steep and rocky mountain that overhangs the town; and three ancient castles, standing on separate, but less elevated mountains, complete the landscape. This scene, under any circumstances, could not have failed to please me; but when beheld with her whose cultivated taste led to a warm appreciation of all that is beautiful in art or nature, how much was my pleasure enhanced! Nor was it alone the taste of Miss Somers that was so highly cultivated. Every site recalled to her

memory the historical events with which it was connected, with an accuracy that astonished while it delighted me.

We visited the cathedral, and in examining the antiquities which abound in its court, Miss Somers evinced no less interest than good taste. She listened attentively to the observations that dropped from Mr. Rivers; and he, flattered by her earnestness, took more than ordinary pains to invest the subject with all the interest which his vast erudition and retentive memory so well enabled him to do. A reference having been made to the founder of the cathedral, Robert Guiscard, son of Tancred, so celebrated by Tasso, the poetry of the great Italian became the topic of conversation; and this young and lovely girl evinced a discrimination in pointing out some of the finest passages, which delighted Mr. Rivers almost as much as it did me. But when, reverting

to the works of Danté, he found that she was not less versed in them, his admiration knew no bounds.

We sauntered from the cathedral to the beach, where, being tempted by the fineness of the evening, we entered a boat, and were soon floating on the calm sea. Twilight, so brief in its duration in Italy, was quickly followed by the rising of the moon, whose silver beams soon tinged the placid water over which we glided, and the boatmen, encouraged by our silence—a silence produced by the calm loveliness of the scene around, joined in a barcarole of a plaintive nature, that harmonized well with our feelings. The words, rude as they were, expressed the regret of parting lovers, about to be divided by the sea, and all the hopes and fears incidental to such a separation were described. Encouraged by our approbation, the boatmen continued to sing, and the airs they

selected being always of a soft and melancholy character, and the words either full of wild passion, or of deep tenderness, sunk into my very soul as music had never previously done.

“ Sing to dese gentlemen, *ma chère*,” said Madame de Stourville. “ Dey vill like your singing better dan dat of de boatmen, I am sure.”

Selina, after a moment’s hesitation, sang an Italian song on the love of home, and so exquisite was her voice, so admirable her method, and so pure and touching her intonation, that even the boatmen betrayed an emotion while listening to her dulcet tones. What, then, must have been my feelings? My very soul was moved, and as my ears drank in the enchanting sounds, while my eyes dwelt with delight on the beautiful countenance of her who breathed them, I felt that henceforth my destiny depended on

her, and that if I could not obtain her affection, life would be indeed a cheerless waste, a gloomy, dreary pilgrimage to me. Few were the commendations bestowed on the lovely songstress, when she had finished; but a silence more eloquent than words told how her auditors were moved.

When we landed, Mr. Rivers having offered his arm to Madame de Stourville, I ventured to present mine to her lovely *élève*, and when I felt her round and exquisitely formed arm gently folded within mine, its touch almost made me tremble. The moonbeams were reflected on her face, which looked fair as Parian marble, and so calm was the expression of that beauteous countenance, that it seemed as if no earthly passion could ever cloud its mild lustre.

“ You have no nights like this in England, I fear,” said Selina, after a silence of some minutes.

“ None,” answered I; “ but do you not remember our climate?”

“ Not at all; I left it when I was so young that I have no recollection of it.”

“ Yet you speak English with as much purity as if you had been brought up in England!”

“ Thanks to an English governess, who took charge of me, until death deprived me of her care. Mrs. Selwyn was indeed a mother to me, and by her unremitting kindness and affection prevented me from knowing the loss of that tender tie.”

The beautiful Selina’s eyes filled with tears as she spoke.

“ Then Madame de Stourville has not long been your companion?” said I.

“ Not above two years,” answered Selina. “ I consider myself fortunate in having so kind and affectionate a friend, although, in intellectual cultivation and accomplishments,

she cannot supply the place of my dear and lamented Mrs. Selwyn."

" You have still one parent left?" observed I.

" Yes, my father still lives; but I never knew a mother's love. I have often pictured to myself what a blessing a mother must be. I frequently dream that I see a mild, lovely, and loving face beam on me, and hear a low, sweet voice call me by the most tender epithets. Yes, a mother must be a blessed tie, a guide to protect and warn youth from error, and to reward obedience and affection."

" Your imagination has created just such a being as my mother was," said I. " Beautiful and good, an angel on earth! Ah! had she known you!"

Our arrival at the door of the hotel stopped a conversation in which both felt an equal interest, and each experienced an increase of confidence, that under different

circumstances an acquaintance of long standing could alone have achieved. Madame de Stourville and Mr. Rivers had also become more friendly and familiar during their walk, and he observed to me, ere we sought our chambers for the night, that he thought her a most kind-hearted and worthy woman.

“ A mystery, however, is attached to the father of Miss Somers,” said Mr. Rivers, “ and by what Madame de Stourville let drop in conversation, he must be a repulsive and disagreeable man. He treated his charming daughter with a coldness, if not a sternness, that hurt the poor girl very much, and which has given the good-natured Frenchwoman a bad opinion of him. He was particularly strict in demanding references about Madame de Stourville, previously to his engaging her as a companion for his daughter; but when she in turn begged leave to inquire something about

him, he very *brusquely* told her that his banker would satisfy her that she ran no risk of bad treatment in engaging to become the companion of his daughter. ‘I felt so little disposed to like him,’ said Madame de Stourville, ‘that I would not have undertaken the task, were it not that I had conceived such an interest in this charming girl that I could not bear to leave her with so stern a guardian. I had but a few months before lost my only child, a girl that any mother might have been proud of, and I saw, or fancied I saw, a likeness between her and Miss Somers, though I must confess my poor lost child was not near so beautiful as Mademoiselle Somers; and this, as well as the desire of perfecting myself in English, increased my wish to remain with her. As soon as our engagement was concluded, Mr. Somers told me that he wished his daughter to visit Italy, and to remain there for a considerable time. ‘I desire that she should

not enter into society,' said he, 'or become known to any persons except the masters it may be necessary to employ for her. All communication with me is to be carried on through the medium of my banker at Paris, who will forward the letters to me. I will place funds in his hands to meet the expenses you will contract, which I limit to eight hundred a-year—a sum amply sufficient for the moderate scale of living I wish to be pursued.' 'But will you not accompany your daughter, sir?' asked Madame de Stourville, surprised and somewhat alarmed at the responsibility she expected to incur. 'I have never been out of France, sir,' continued she, 'have little experience of the world, have not been accustomed to travel, and dread being exposed to the imposition and annoyance to which women are subjected, more especially in a foreign country.'—'You will have the protection of a sober and steady man-servant, who speaks Italian, a

comfortable carriage to travel in, and, by avoiding *tables d'hôtes*, those certain places for being brought in contact with adventurers and improper acquaintances, you will escape annoyance. I have neither the power nor the inclination to accompany my daughter to Italy, but, satisfied with the recommendations I have received in your favour, I confide her to your care.' ' He took leave of *ma chère demoiselle*,' continued Madame de Stourville, ' without betraying the slightest emotion, and when she, *pauvre bel ange*, shocked at his coldness, changed colour, and had her eyes filled with tears, he harshly told her not to make a fool of herself; and merely shook hands with her as we entered the travelling carriage. The dear girl wept nearly the whole of the first stage from Paris, and I was so touched by her grief and the painful cause that led to it, that the words of consolation I wished to speak expired on my lips. Ah ! Monsieur

Rivére, it is a sad thing to see an amiable young creature, with a heart filled with kind affection, repulsed by a cold-hearted, unnatural father! I do not wish to have any concealments from Mr. Somers, yet I am certain that he will blame me very much, when he learns the *enlèvement* at La Cava.””

CHAPTER IX.

THE next day we proceeded to Paestum, passing by Eboli and Persano, a hunting seat belonging to the King of Naples.

The first view of the temples is indeed most imposing ; standing on a plain bounded on one side by a chain of mountains, and open on the other to the Gulf of Salerno. Nevertheless, the sight of these noble ruins impressed me only with melancholy reflections, and chilled the soft and delicious emotions to which my heart had, for the first time, so lately become sensible, by re-

minding me of the brevity, the nothingness of life; and such reflections but ill accorded with the new feelings that had taken possession of my breast. There stood these sublime wrecks of antiquity,— no longer, as formerly, surrounded by all the luxuriant cultivation peculiar to a fine climate. The roses of Pæstum, once so famed, live now only in the pages of the classic poets of the Augustan age, and desolation and solitude reign around.

My fair companion was also impressed by the solemnity of the scene; and when I noticed it, confessed that the sight of fine ruins always sobered, if it did not sadden, her mind.

“ Of the thousands who, like us, have resorted to this spot,” said she, “ even since these temples have been in ruin, no trace remains; while they still lift their proud heads towards the blue sky, as if defying the efforts of that ruthless tyrant—Time,

who has scathed but not yet destroyed them. How brief, how transitory, seems the life of man compared with these enduring monuments of distant ages! Near them, we are but as shadows fleeting away to eternity; and our cares and trials previously considered as not only important enough to occupy all our own thoughts, but to create an interest in the breasts of others, sink into insignificance!"

The discovery of this sympathy with my own feelings touched me to the heart; nor could the common-place reflections uttered by Madame de Stourville dispel the thoughts it awakened.

"It is a pity the King of Naples does not repair dese temples," observed that lady. "They would look moche better if set to right and whitewashed, I am sure; and if one of them was appropriated to the use of a *restaurateur* and *café*, fitted up with mirrors, it would be a great improvement.

There is something in the dreariness and air of the place dat makes one feel very hungry, at least such is the effect on me."

The fair Selina could not repress a smile, which Madame de Stourville having observed, she with great simplicity remarked, " Ah ! you smile, *ma chère*, for you tink dat because *you* never give de toughts to de eating, oders are like you. Ven I vas young, too, I did not tink so much of my dinner as I do now ; for youth gives de good spirits—*de gaieté de cœur*. But ven de age come, one likes to have de good dinner ; and ven one do see all old tings—like dese temples, *par exemple*,—tumbling into decay, it do remind one dat de old people, like dem, are also falling to ruin, and dis tought do make one *mélancholique*, and den one vants de *gouûter*, de vat you English call de luncheon."

Luckily for Madame de Stourville, Mr. Rivers had anticipated her wants, and a cold chicken or two, with some other eat-

ables, being produced, she rendered justice to the repast. While she yet lingered over it, Miss Somers and I strolled around the temples, and were leaving that of Neptune, when, on turning round one of the columns, we suddenly found ourselves in the presence of a lady, and at the same moment Selina started, and grasping my arm convulsively, exclaimed, “ Oh! Mr. Meredith, the terrible man who carried me off from La Cava has this moment disappeared behind one of the columns of the Temple of Ceres. I instantly recognised him by the peculiarity of his mode of walking; and he retreated so rapidly when we came in view, that it is evident he wished to avoid being seen by me. Do not leave me, I entreat you,” said she, as I endeavoured to release myself from her grasp. “ Do not pursue him! Do not—do not leave me!”

While she uttered these words in a low

and agitated voice, the strange lady remained motionless, intently gazing on Miss Somers; but after a moment's pause, she approached the latter, and said, " You seem alarmed, young lady; can I be of any use?" The manner and voice of the stranger denoted that she appertained to no common class of society; and her air, too, was dignified and ladylike. Her face was shaded by a black veil, so much less transparent than those generally worn, that it struck me that it was used more with a view to concealment, than to shield her from the effects of the sun.

" Let me recommend you to use this *flacon*," said she, gently, offering a smelling-bottle to Miss Somers. " You were alarmed, probably by a snake," resumed the stranger; " I have noticed several among the rank herbage around the temples, but they are not mischievous unless trod on."

Miss Somers was still too much agitated to reply; so I, somewhat suspicious that the man who had fled had been in attendance on this lady,—for I could not imagine that she had visited this remote region alone and unprotected,—observed, “that the alarm of Miss Somers had been caused by the view of a person whom she and her friends were very desirous to bring to justice.”

“Indeed,” said the stranger; “but may not this young lady have made a mistake? I have been here some time, and have seen no one, save the peasant who lives in yonder miserable hovel.”

“No, I did not, could not mistake,” replied Selina; “that man’s air and gestures have made too terrible an impression on me ever to be forgotten.”

I thought that the stranger appeared embarrassed, but at this moment Madame de Stourville and Mr. Rivers joined us, and having, in a few words, related to the latter

what had occurred, and placed Miss Somers's arm within his, I rapidly pursued the track pointed out by her as the one her dreaded persecutor had taken. In vain did I search the temples, and explore every place likely to offer a refuge to the object of my pursuit. No trace of him could I find, so I was returning to my party, dissatisfied and annoyed at the ill success of my search, when it occurred to me to proceed to the hovel, and question the peasant, who earns a scanty and uncertain subsistence by supplying a resting-place for the horses and postillions of the visitors to Pæstum. It struck me that, he evinced some confusion, when asserting that the strange lady, whose *caleche* was placed in the rear of his house, had arrived alone, the postillion who drove being the only person who had accompanied her. Vexed and disappointed, I returned to my party, and found that the strange lady still continued with them, although the coldness

with which her advances towards establishing a conversation were met, ought to have discouraged her.

"I have been unfortunate in my search," said I, in answer to Mr. Rivers's question; "nevertheless, I do not yet despair of discovering the vile miscreant, and bringing him to the punishment which he so justly merits."

Madame de Stourville, drawing one of the arms of Selina through her own, while Mr. Rivers retained the other, whispered Miss Somers to move away, and having coldly bowed to the stranger, we were turning from her, when she advanced, and begged permission to join our party, alleging as an excuse for this intrusion, that being alone she felt nervous, more especially since she had heard that some dangerous character of whom we were in search, had been lately seen hovering about the temples.

"If you will permit my *caleche* to follow in the wake of yours," said she to Madame

de Stourville, “ you will much oblige me.”

“ We have no right to prevent you,” replied Mr. Rivers; “ but pardon me if I say, that a nervous lady would hardly come to such a place as this without a protector, and that it seems rather unaccountable that the intrepidity which led to your venturing here alone, should so suddenly have forsaken you.”

“ Let her not come wid us, I pray,” whispered Madame de Stourville.

The stranger seemed embarrassed, as our repugnance to her joining our party became manifest; nevertheless, she still kept near us.”

“ Order the horses to be got ready,” said Madame de Stourville, “ and let us set out for Salerno as soon as possible, that we may arrive there before dark.”

Mr. Rivers, consigning the arm of Selina to me, walked to the house where the ser-

vants and carriages had been left, to desire them to make ready for our departure. Emboldened by the absence of the oldest and gravest of our party, the stranger walked close to the side of Madame de Stourville, and observed that it gave her pleasure to recognise in the young lady a compatriot.

“ Dat may be, madame,” replied the *gouvernante*, “ but dis young lady never makes any acquaintance wid strangers, so you will please not to speak to her.”

“ There surely can be no crime in one lady addressing a few words, *en passant*, to another,” said the stranger, evidently discomposed by the pertinacity with which Madame de Stourville rejected her advances.

“ De ladies who are *bien elevé*, dat is well bred, do not force dier vords on young ladies ven dier *chaperons* do not approve it,” re-

marked the *gouvernante*; after which reproof the stranger continued to walk silently on.

“ Only fancy,” said Mr. Rivers, returning at the moment, “ our servants, as well as the postillions, are in a state of complete intoxication. This looks very odd, for our domestic has hitherto been a very sober man, and I have understood that yours, Madame de Stourville, was peculiarly steady.”

“ And my postillion, sir,” interrupted the lady, is he, too, intoxicated!”

“ He either is, or affects to be so,” replied Mr. Rivers, looking suspiciously at the stranger.

“ I never knew our servant to drink—never saw the least symptoms of it,” said Madame de Stourville.

“ What is to be done?” demanded Mr. Rivers. “ We cannot stay all night in

yonder wretched hovel, yet to trust these ladies in a carriage driven by a drunken postillion is not to be thought of."

"I will drive their *caleche*," said I, eagerly; and you will accompany them in it, taking the precaution of having our arms with you, except a pair of pistols, which I will keep with me."

We walked towards the house, which I again entered, and there I beheld the servants and postillions stretched on the floor, sleeping off the effects of their libations, to the vast extent of which, several empty bottles bore ample testimony. I threw a plentiful supply of cold water on the faces of our servants, in the hope of bringing them to their senses; but sundry groans and half-intelligible words were the only effects I produced. The owner of the hovel appeared nearly equally stupified as the servants and postillion; and though I repeatedly shook

him, he either could not, or would not, speak. I harnessed the horses, and having tied a scarf around my waist, I stuck my pistols into it, and mounted, while Mr. Rivers handed Miss Somers and Madame de Stourville into the *calèche*. The strange lady seized the arm of Mr. Rivers, and entreated him to permit her to occupy the fourth seat in the carriage.

“ You surely cannot be so cruel, so uncharitable!” exclaimed she, “ as to leave a helpless woman in such a wild place, and among a set of intoxicated menials! In pity, let me accompany you to Salerno.”

“ O, let her, pray do let her come,” said Selina; “ it would be too dreadful to leave her here.”

“ I suppose we must give her de seat, do I not like it at all;” observed Madame de Stourville, *sans ceremonie*.

Mr. Rivers, though evidently with re-

luctance, handed the stranger into the carriage; and I drove off, deeply impressed with a sense of the responsibility I incurred in my new task. Anxious to advance as rapidly as was consistent with the safety of my precious charge, we had made a considerable progress in our route, when suddenly eight men rushed from behind a hedge, and a shot from one of the foremost of them penetrated my left arm, which fell powerless to my side. The carriage was soon surrounded by the whole party, one of whom was masked. Mr. Rivers was dragged from it, his arms pinioned behind his back, and while in this defenceless condition, the miscreants repeatedly struck him with the but-ends of their carabines, until, nearly senseless, he fell to the earth. Maddened at beholding the man who was masked, and who it was evident was the leader of the party, seize Miss Somers, and, in spite of her frantic

cries, bear her from the *caleche*, I rushed towards him, when one of his followers aimed a blow at my head with his pistol, which felled me to the ground, and for a time deprived me of all consciousness.

CHAPTER X.

WHEN restored to a sense of what had occurred, I found Madame de Stourville and Mr. Rivers anxiously watching over me; the former weeping bitterly, and the latter filled with alarm about me.

I now learned that the bandits who had assailed us, had, after tying the arms of Madame de Stourville and Mr. Rivers, unharnessed the horses, and given them their liberty.

They then forcibly carried off Miss Somers to a boat lying at a short distance from the shore, which made directly for a vessel at

anchor about a league off — the strange lady having voluntarily accompanied the party. Two peasants passing the spot where we lay, had liberated Madame de Stourville and Mr. Rivers, and assisted them in their endeavours to stanch my wounds and restore me to consciousness.

“ It is quite evident,” said Mr. Rivers, “ that the strange woman who forced herself on us is an accomplice, if not a principal, in the abduction of Miss Somers, as her not being ill treated, and her voluntarily accompanying these brigands, testifies.”

The peasants, who lived at no great distance, offered to assist in transporting me to the cottage of one of them, a task of some difficulty, from the extreme weakness caused by loss of blood. Madame de Stourville and Mr. Rivers had also suffered severely from the brutality of those who had wounded me. But though the pain of my wounds and the weakness occasioned by loss

of blood rendered me nearly helpless, I forgot my bodily ills in the shock and grief my mind experienced in the loss of my adored Selina, and in the terror excited for her fate. To be thus powerless to protect or rescue her maddened me, and I groaned in torture, as I pictured her to myself surrounded by the miscreants who had carried her off.

Having reached the humble cottage of the peasant, and being placed on the coarse but clean pallet filled with the straw of Indian corn, it was proposed to send one of the men to Salerno for post-horses and a surgeon. Luckily, one of the horses that had been liberated from the *caleche* had strayed from the road across some fields that lay in the direction of the house to which I had been brought, and was quietly feeding on the scanty herbage. The peasant soon secured and mounted him, and in a short time was on his road to Salerno, while I, exhausted, dropped into a deep slumber, from

which I awoke not until the arrival of the surgeon and post-horses. With these came an escort of six men, soldiers, from the limited garrison of Salerno, sent by the commanding officer, on hearing of our disaster. Having ascertained from the peasants that our assailants had embarked, and were out of reach, their bravery knew no bounds. They waved their swords, uttered various threats of vengeance against the brigands who had dared to molest their *excellencies*, —the brave and noble *Forestierii*,—and assured us that while *they* were near us we were safe. The surgeon looked very grave while examining my wounds, talked of concussion of the brain following heavy blows on the head, hinted of the probable necessity of trepanning, and amputation of the arm; but held out hopes, that if there was a chance of being spared such desperate operations, *he*, and he alone, could effect it. He told me that I ought to consider myself

indeed fortunate in falling into his hands, for that his skill was well known, and that his practice in gun-shot wounds had been very extensive in the Neapolitan army, when opposed to the Austrian forces, over which, as he maintained, they had achieved repeated victories. If I did not entertain the most perfect confidence in the skill and judgment of *il Signor Carabosca*, it was not for want of receiving innumerable declarations of both from himself. The legs and arms he had, as he asserted, taken off, could not be counted; and the bullets he had extracted might supply an army. The peasant's wife turned up her eyes and crossed herself, as she listened to Signor Carabosca's boastings, while Mr. Rivers shrugged his shoulders, and evinced other symptoms of incredulity and dissatisfaction. The motion of the carriage greatly increased the pain in my arm; but so wholly occupied were my thoughts by the fate of Selina,

that I was regardless of the torture I endured. With what bitter feelings did I contemplate the route, which together, basking in her smiles and listening in rapture to the tones of her silvery voice, we had traversed the previous day, rich in hope and health, while now—powerless to rescue her—she was snatched away, and exposed to dangers, the bare notion of which filled me with horror! Every turn of the road recalled some look, some observation, of hers. Her accents seemed still to dwell in my ears, while she was far, far away, and possibly I might never more behold her.

Madame de Stourville wept and talked, and talked and wept by turns, appealing frequently to Heaven and to me, whether her *chère et belle demoiselle* was not the most perfect creature in existence?—a fact I was ready to maintain at the point of my sword,—and whether she herself was not the person in all the world the most to be

pitied?—a statement to which I was by no means disposed to assent.

Arrived at Salerno, the sight of that calm and beautiful bay, over which we had glided so shortly before, and of the spots where, with her arm in mine, we had walked, recalled the conversation that had occurred with a vividness that made the recent scene of her abduction appear like some frightful dream. Bitterly did Madame de Stourville now reproach herself for not having directly returned to Naples when Miss Somers had been restored to her, as in a populous city she would have been safe from the daring violence that had a second time been so successfully employed against her, and in this regret Mr. Rivers and I truly sympathized.

Various and fruitless were the conjectures in which we all three indulged as to the probable motives of those who had planned and executed this crime; but the perfect ignorance in which Madame de Stourville

was relative to the family history and connexions of Miss Somers, precluded her from furnishing any clue to them. Mr. Rivers again sent information of the event to the English minister at Naples, and authorized him to offer a reward for the discovery of Miss Somers and the detection of the delinquents. The civil authorities at Salerno proposed to send persons around the country in search of the young lady; but as we knew she had been taken to sea, we declined their services.

A violent fever was the result of my wounds, and Mr. Rivers was compelled to have recourse, not only to peremptory orders, but to personal superintendence, to prevent *il Signor Carabosca* from essaying his skill, of which he entertained considerable doubt, in extracting the ball which he alleged was lodged in my arm. But Mr. Rivers was determined to entrust the operation only to an English surgeon of eminence

established at Naples, for whom he had sent an express; a measure which greatly irritated the Signor, who repeatedly declared that *his* military experience peculiarly fitted him for the treatment of wounds. Madame de Stourville ventured to suggest the expediency of calling in a French surgeon and physician, they being, as she asserted, far superior to English practitioners, of whom, with the prejudice peculiar to her nation, she entertained a great dread.

“ De English doctors kill more patients than disease does,” said she. “ And as to surgeons, none are so good as de French, for no oders have de same opportunities of seeing wounds, as no people fight like de French.”

“ *Cospetto!* Signora, you are in error!” said Carabosca. “ The Italians, and, above all, the Neapolitans, are the most desperate people in the whole world for fighting; and that is the reason why we understand gun-

shot and sabre wounds better than the surgeons of all other nations. Why, this hand”—and he held up his right arm—“ has lopped off more limbs than I can count, and no one was ever able to say that Giacomo Carabosca bungled in his operations! Yes, I am the man to whip off an arm or a leg in a trice! And it will not be my fault, Signor Rivers, if the Signor dies from having the amputation too long deferred.”

Dr. Luther and Mr. Saunders arrived at Salerno even sooner than was expected; and the first having administered some cooling potions to abate the fever, the latter examined my wounds, and announced, to the great satisfaction of Mr. Rivers, that the one in my arm was not of a dangerous nature, and that the bullet had not lodged in it. The servants left at Pæstum now arrived. They had been rendered incapable of performing their duty by having had a narcotic mixed in their wine, of which they

had not drank a sufficient quantity to have otherwise produced so violent an effect. They had remained nearly in a state of insensibility from a short time after they had drank the wine until a late hour the following day, and had noticed a man, the description of whom corresponded precisely with the person seen by Miss Somers, leaving the house at Pæstum as they entered it, after removing our collation. Little doubt could be entertained that the *enlèvement* had been planned for some hours, and that the planners had been aware of our movements. The postillion who had driven the strange lady to Pæstum had informed ours that the lady was accompanied by a man who appeared to be of an inferior grade in society, and wholly subservient to her commands. They had arrived at Pæstum at an early hour in the morning, and the man had exchanged signals with a vessel at anchor a short distance from the shore, on

which a boat was soon after launched with three men, who drew it up beneath a shelving bank near the water's edge. This was all the information they could give us, for the owner of the wretched house at Pæstum either was, or affected to be, in total ignorance relative to the strange lady; but from his denying her being accompanied by the man whom our servants saw, it appeared that he knew more than he would tell.

Under the care of Dr. Luther and Mr. Saunders, I soon began to recover, and in the course of a week was able to bear the journey to Naples, whither Madame de Stourville accompanied Mr. Rivers and myself. I was most impatient to arrive there, in the hope that on the spot some intelligence could be obtained of Selina; but, alas! nothing relative to her had been discovered, although the English minister had used every exertion in his power for the purpose, and had been assisted by the civil au-

thorities of Naples. Madame de Stourville wrote to the father of Selina to acquaint him with what had occurred; and now, in a state of nervous excitation that it was painful to witness, awaited the result of the active search set on foot for the discovery of that dear and lovely girl.

CHAPTER XI.

AFTER a month's *séjour* at Naples, impatiently borne, but rendered inevitable by my weakness, I proposed visiting Sicily, urged to this step by a latent, though feeble hope of there gaining some trace of the fugitives. Madame de Stourville shed many tears at our parting, which seemed to renew afresh the poignancy of her grief for Miss Somers, and I truly sympathized in her feelings.

We embarked for Palermo with a fair wind; but had not been long at sea, before a dull calm left our vessel like a log on the

water, and irritated my nerves not a little, so anxious was I to reach our destination. Under other circumstances, I might have enjoyed the contemplation of the blue sky above, and the as blue sea which mirrored it, unbroken by a single wave, while the balmy air re-invigorated my languid frame. But my thoughts were so wholly occupied by Selina, that I was insensible to everything around me; and I would have preferred a storm that impelled our bark to the shore where I hoped to learn tidings of her, to the soft and delicious weather that prevailed.

Having refused to descend to the cabin, or partake the evening meal, I remained on deck, and watched the shades of twilight stealing over the vessel. Bright purple clouds, fringed with roseate and golden tints, spread themselves over the heavens, and were reflected on the sea, until they every moment lost some portion of their

splendour. At length, they subsided into sombre hues, which cast a dim and shadowy veil over the water, the rippling of which against the sides of the vessel produced a monotonous and drowsy sound, that increased the pensiveness that stole over me. There is no situation more calculated to awaken melancholy reflections, even in those not naturally prone to them, than the fall of evening at sea. How, then, must it effect those who have any subject for regret? The mind becomes softened; the loved, the absent, the dead, are remembered with fond sadness, and voices, silent for ever, and perchance forgotten during the busy hours of day, are now once more recalled to memory. I thought of my dear mother in her distant grave, until the past rose up before me as vividly as if I had only lost that sainted parent a few days before. I reproached myself for having of late neglected her memory, and accused myself of ingratitude in having

so soon found consolation for her loss. But even while thus reproaching myself, the thought of the lovely Selina would return to banish that of my mother, and the low tones of her musical voice, and the beautiful expression of her soul-beaming face, would haunt me. Oh! how discordant at such moments sounded the mirth and laughter, the clatter of plates, and the calls for attendance from the noisy occupants of the cabin.

It was while I was thus indulging in pensive reveries, that the sailor at the helm commenced singing the very air that the boatmen at Salerno had selected the evening previous to our fatal visit to Pæstum. Every note, every word, brought the scene of that happy evening back, and as I listened, tears started to my eyes. How powerful is the effect of music in awaking associations! Mine were of a very melancholy nature, yet I would not have changed

them for all that pleasure could offer; and when the sailor ceased to sing, I slipped some money into his hand, and asked him to repeat the song.

Mr. Rivers, and one of the passengers, a burly-looking, red-faced man, came on deck while the sailor was still singing; and I now discovered that individual was an Englishman. He addressed the sailor in bad Italian, told him his song was a most dull and stupid one, and advised him to change it for something of a more gay and lively character. The sailor said that the Signor Forestieri had commanded the song.

“ Well, there is no accounting for taste,” observed my rubicund compatriot; “ and if the gentleman is satisfied, why, it is no business of mine.”

“ I have heard that air before, somewhere or other,” said Mr. Rivers.

“ O, for the matter of that, sir, the Italian songs are all so like each other, that there

is no distinguishing one from another," remarked the stranger. "I have now been thirty-five years, off and on, a resident in Sicily, but I could never take to Italian music. It seems to me to be all the same, and very unlike our English. Give me 'Nancy Dawson,' and 'Molly put the Kettle on,' and half-a-hundred other merry songs of the same description, and I'll give up the operas, and other Italian music, with all my heart."

"Then you are no admirer of it, I observe," said Mr. Rivers.

"No, sir, certainly not. I think Italian music very like Italian wine, poor, weak, washy stuff!"

"But surely the Marsala we have been drinking was neither weak nor washy?"

"Agreed; but why? simply because that wine was manufactured by me."

"Indeed."

"Yes, I assure you. I had not been long

in Sicily before I determined to make a wine that should rival Sherry, and I think I have succeeded. The heat of the climate ripens the grapes in Sicily capitally, and, with plenty of brandy, I give the wine they produce as much body, ay, and more too, than any Sherry that ever left Spain. The whole secret of making good wine consists in putting plenty of brandy into it. Look at me, sir, where will you find a healthier or a heartier man of sixty years of age? I attribute it all to my never drinking anything but Marsala, made after my own plan. I never am ill, except now and then having a sharp twinge of the gout, which I don't mind a fig, and an occasional head-ache not worth minding, so I think I have a right to speak well of Marsala."

" You like Sicily, I suppose."

" *Cosi, cosi*, as the Italians say. I liked it better when Lord—let me see, what was his name, commanded them; I always forget

his name. Lord—Lord— ; I can't remember it; but it's no matter. He commanded at Palermo, was a general in the army, and had two or three English regiments there at the same time. Let me see, what were the regiments. The —— ; bless me, how odd that I can't remember the names; but it's no consequence; and there were a great many English people came there at the same time, and they could not bear the weak, washy, Italian wine, and so I took it into my head to manufacture some that I thought would please them, and it did; and from that time I have gone on, and my business has prospered. There was Colonel —— ; what was his name? Well, it is very vexatious to have forgotten it, for he was one of my best customers. Colonel—Colonel Thompson, was it ? No, not Thompson; Thomas, I think it was, or Sampson; but it's no great matter; he recommended my Marsala to the mess, and to

all his friends, and, above all, to Major — ; how strange I can't recollect his name ! Major—Major— ; I think it begins with an N— ; but it's no consequence. And there was King Ferdinand from Naples, and the Queen, and the royal family, all living at Palermo, because the Neapolitans thought the change of air would do them good ; and there was a French Duke, I forget his name, who married a daughter of King Ferdinand's, a most worthy and excellent lady she was ; I wish I could remember her name ; but it's no matter. Palermo was then a very gay place, and the bands of the English regiments used to play every evening, such beautiful tunes, 'Nancy Dawson,' 'Molly put the Kettle on,' 'Money Musk,' 'Rule Britannia,' and 'God save the King.' It used to make me feel so queer like, to hear these tunes so far away from home. Ay, talk of Italian music, what is it compared with any of the tunes

I have mentioned! When King—; I forget his name, but it's no great matter, he was a Frenchman, and a fine soldier, too, I have heard say; left Naples, King Ferdinand and his family (all but the old queen, who went to somewhere in Germany; I don't remember the name; and died there) returned to Naples, and found everything so improved and clean, they could hardly recognise the place. And the French duke, who married King Ferdinand's daughter, went to France, and the English Lord, who commanded at Palermo, and the regiments stationed there, all left, and the town was quite deserted like, and never was the same since, and I have never, except during two or three visits I have paid to England, heard 'Rule Britannia,' 'God save the King,' 'Nancy Dawson,' or 'Molly put the Kettle on,' played or sung. I am sorry to say England is very much fallen off in this respect of late. You no longer hear

the nice old tunes played about the streets in London as in the old times, on the hand-organs, and hurdy-gurdies. No, a plague on them, they are always playing Italian tunes, which much vexed me."

In this manner did Mr. Medlicut, for thus was he called, continue to chatter, forgetting the name of every person of whom he spoke ; until, no longer able to support his incessant *babillage*, I rose and sought my cabin—an example which he quickly followed. When he and Mr. Rivers had entered their berths, and proved by certain nasal sounds that they were asleep, I again ascended to the deck, and once more reclined in my former station, delighted to be released from the presence of my stupid fellow countryman. How an individual of cultivated mind, and refined habits like Mr. Rivers, could hold companionship with such a person as Mr. Medlicut, surprised and displeased me ; and I rather piqued myself

on my own fastidiousness of taste, which precluded a patient endurance of such an infliction.

The moon had now silvered the sea with its bright beams ; a gentle, but favourable breeze filled our sails ; and we glided smoothly on our course, the silence unbroken save by the murmur of the water as the prow of our vessel broke its glassy surface, leaving far behind in its wake a line of silvery radiance, still more brilliant than the rest of the sea. Soothed by the tranquillity of the scene, I dropped into a calm and deep sleep, from which I awoke not, until, at an early hour next morning, Mr. Rivers stood by my side, carefully placing a warm cloak to preserve me from cold—an act of kindness that broke my slumber.

CHAPTER XII.

MR. MEDLICUT soon after came on deck, and declared that—thanks to the additional bumpers of Marsala he had drunk the previous night—he had slept perfectly well, a precaution he had been advised to adopt by a colonel, whose name and regiment he vainly tried to remember, and which, as usual, he said was of no consequence.

“Have you many English residents at Palermo?” inquired Mr. Rivers.

“No, sir; few except some merchants and their families. Some of these are worthy

and respectable people. Mr. ——; bless me, how stupid it is to forget his name. He came from some place I cannot call to mind, married the daughter of an old friend of mine, whose name I can't remember, which is very strange, as we were very intimate in former years. We have also Mr. Johnson, no, Tonson, or Jobson, if I don't mistake, a very pleasant, clever fellow, swears by my Marsala, and recommends it to all his friends and correspondents. His wife, a very pretty woman, a Sicilian; her name was, let me see, Casanilla; no, Chiesa Natala; no, it was not either of these names, but something like them; but it's of no consequence. We have also a Mr. ——; there again, hang me if I haven't forgotten his name, although I know him as well as any man in Palermo. He has a pretty wife, but a confounded shrew, quarrels with all the other merchants' wives, and makes her husband take her part, however in the

wrong she may be, so that he, although naturally a peaceable fellow, is always at war with his neighbours on her account. O! the English women, I must say, are ever much addicted to prying into the affairs of any strangers, particularly females, who come to Palermo, and are never over charitable in the conclusions they draw from their real or fancied discoveries. Why, it was only two months ago that they were all set agog by the arrival of a lady whom they declared to be a most mysterious person, though what they could see in her to lead them to think so, I cannot make out. She brought a respectable letter of credit, which, in my opinion, is a sufficient proof of being all right, alleged herself to be a widow, is neither young nor handsome, although she bears the remains of having been in her youth what is called a showy woman. But because, notwithstanding they made her overtures of civility, she keeps aloof from

mixing in their society, they indulge in various conjectures about her. The occasional visits of a strange, and somewhat ferocious looking man, something between a pirate and a courier, who comes from Naples, and stays but a short time with her, has awakened the curiosity and suspicion of the English ladies at Palermo. This man has a small vessel, in which he sails about. It is manned by five or six Genoese sailors, dare-devil sort of fellows, who, when in port, if questioned about their master, as they often are, either menace or ridicule those who speak to them. The lady's establishment consists of a female servant and four Frenchmen, who seem devoted to her, and are, strange to say for Frenchmen, as reserved and silent about their mistress and her affairs as she herself is."

"And what is the name of this lady?" inquired Mr. Rivers. "Her name is Mrs. ——, Mrs. ——; now is it not too bad of me

to have forgotten it? but it is of no consequence after all."

"And in what part of Palermo does this lady reside?" inquired I, struck by a sudden notion that she might be the very person who had intruded herself on us the memorable day at Pæstum.

"She resides in a house near the sea-shore, with a high-walled garden in the rear."

The vessel, the description of the man, and his habit of cruising about, agreed with the suspicions I had formed; and it occurred to me that through our loquacious fellow passenger we might obtain a clue to the discovery of the lovely Selina. No sooner had this idea entered my head, than I instantly became as polite and chatty with Mr. Medlicut as I had previously been cold and reserved. I encouraged his propensity to gossip, and was soon furnished with innumerable anecdotes and tales rela-

tive to all his acquaintances in Sicily. Many of them were not over creditable to the persons of whom they were related; but fortunately, the utter defectiveness of his memory in retaining names rendered his scandalous *historiettes* harmless; and the *piquants* anecdotes of "Mrs. ——; hang me if I can remember her name," or "Mrs. Johnson, Tomson, or Sampson," proved, indeed, of "no consequence."

When he had left us to go down to the cabin, to indulge in a glass of his favourite Marsala, which he pronounced to be the universal panacea for all maladies, being, as he asserted, a preventive, as well as a cure, Mr. Rivers observed to me that he thought we had obtained a clue to Miss Somers.

"It struck me from the first," said he, "that this garrulous man, from knowing Sicily so well, might be of use to us. It was this belief that induced me to cultivate his acquaintance; although I saw that you took

little pains to conceal the distaste with which his loquacity had inspired you. Had I, like you, avoided him, we should never have found this clue."

At length our voyage drew to a close, and as we neared the Sicilian shore, its beauty made a deep impression on us. There is something very exciting in the first view of a strange country. Whatever notions of it we may have previously formed, are found to be so unlike the reality, that a sentiment of disappointment is mingled even with the admiration it calls forth. The scene so new to our eyes has existed for centuries as we now beheld it, and in the land before us, no familiar face comes forth to smile a welcome to us; no friendly hand is held out to meet our own; the very language is new and strange to us; and we experience that feeling of loneliness always peculiar to the first landing on a foreign shore—a feeling that reminds us of our own

insignificance in life. Is there a human being in this new land that would care if the ocean swallowed us? is a thought that suggests itself, as we gaze around. This mental question hope answered in my breast, by whispering, "Yes, if Selina dwells in Sicily, she would care!" and this idea cheered in a moment the sense of loneliness that was stealing over me.

"Here we are, Mr. ——; hang me if I haven't forgotten your name; but it's of no consequence. Is not that a beautiful, a glorious view? There," continued Mr. Medlicut, "stands Monte Catalfano on one side, and Monte Pellegrino on the other. The port and its mole are beneath Monte Pellegrino. Yes, Palermo, though somewhat dilapidated, is still a fine place, and so I think you will admit when you have seen it and its environs. Command me in all that can be of use to you; for it will give me real pleasure to serve or oblige my

countrymen. I can offer you rooms in my house, and a hearty welcome. It was only last year that I had Sir Thomas ——; dear me, I have forgotten his name; staying with me. He is a baronet, and has a fine place in some county—let me see if I can't remember the name. Norfolk—no, Suffolk, I think it is, but it's of no consequence. I have his name, and the name of his place written down at home. I made him write it, for I never trust to my memory."

We declined availing ourselves of his hospitable offer, and he then good-naturedly volunteered to conduct us to the best inn, and arrange with its owner for our lodging &c. during our stay. " You must let me send you some of my own choice Marsala; you will find nothing like it in any other house than mine."

Mr. Medlicut was really very useful to us, for he consigned our luggage to some of the porters on the mole, all of whom seemed

to know him very well; gave them directions whither they were to be conveyed; and left the vessel with us. "Here," said he, "is the Porta Felice; see what a fine view of the city it commands. Is it not a charming prospect?" And charming it truly was, so much so, that we paused to behold it. "Ay, I thought you would admire Palermo; every stranger does; and if you like antiquities, I have a friend, an Irishman, settled here many years, as a teacher of the English language, who can tell you all about the Carthaginians, and other ancient people connected with this place. He says the real name of this city was Panormas, from which, I tell him, panorama is derived; but this he will not admit. Lord bless you, he will go on for whole hours, and days, if any one will listen to him, repeating such hard words as are enough to break one's jaws to pronounce, and how he can keep them in his head seems a miracle to me. I

told him this once, and he answered, that the places he looked on reminded him of the events and names of those connected with them, which had occurred in the olden time. But I remarked, ‘ Why, I see the places as well as you do, but that does not make me a whit wiser about the events or the names.’ He could say nothing to this, for it was a poser; so he turned up his eyes and shrugged his shoulders.”

Mr. Medlicut pointed out to us two fine streets, each a mile long, which cross the city at right angles; and the Piazza Vigliena, whence we had a beautiful view of the north of the Porta Felice, through which the blue sea was seen; and to the south, the Porta Nuova, the fine mountains, and a castle, which crowns Monreale. At length we reached the *locando*, where our new acquaintance soon installed us in very spacious, if not comfortable apartments, after bargaining, as hard with the landlord as if he

believed a rigid economy in our expenditure was highly desirable, if not essentially necessary. Again offering his services to us, with a warmth of manner that proved his desire of their being accepted, he took his leave, promising an early visit.

CHAPTER XIII.

HAVING dined, Mr. Rivers and I, declining the attendance of the cicerone, who presented himself at the door of the hotel as soon as we appeared at it, strolled forth to explore Palermo. We stopped to admire the Cassaro, the general effect of which is good; and the footways on each side, a comfort so uncommon in foreign streets, greatly pleased my companion. The Palazzo Geraci is an imposing edifice; and the majority of the houses in this part of Palermo are lofty and well built. I felt a tre-

pitation as I cast my eyes on every side in search of some face or figure that might furnish a clue to the object of all my thoughts, forgetful that there was little probability that those who had carried off the lovely Selina would permit her to appear in public. I longed to visit the spot described by Mr. Medlicut as the one where the mysterious lady had taken up her abode; but the evening was now too far advanced to seek it, even if I had been acquainted with the direction. We sauntered through the square of the Palazzo, and examined the building itself, which is a motley structure, partly Saracenic and partly modern, neither offering good specimens of architecture.

And now the shades of night descended, and soon after, the rising moon came forth from her shadowy curtain, flooding the sky with light, and tinging every object around with her silvery beams. The sounds of

music were heard issuing from open lattices and balconies; soft airs with dulcet words lisped forth as Italian lips only can breathe them; or sprightly notes were struck from guitars, accompanied by songs, given in the true comic style, in which Italians are said to excel. Every turn presented happy groups hurrying to some scene of amusement, or else enjoying the evening air, which, after the sultry days peculiar to this country, is felt to be a positive pleasure. Yes, at Palermo, even more than at Naples, we were continually reminded that we were in a southern climate; and ill at ease as was my mind, I felt its painful thoughts soothed by the influence of the delicious atmosphere. Even Mr. Rivers, whose age and character rendered him so much less liable to be affected by it, observed, that those who had resided some time in Italy, and above all, in Sicily, could well understand how great an influence the enervating balminess of the

air, the sweet music, and the bright moonlit scenery, must have on an impressionable nature. "The very atmosphere is infectious," said he, "and is calculated to dispose him only to pleasurable emotions who in our northern clime might have remained a grave and reflecting character."

We strolled to the Pian odella Marina, and paused before the picturesque fountain near the Senate-house; on the showers of crystal-like water thrown up from which, the moonbeams cast the most dazzling radiance. We returned to our hotel, and, having refreshed ourselves with some iced *sorbetto*, retired to our beds, with the sounds of tinkling music still ringing in our ears from wandering musicians, who seemed loth to give up the enjoyment of the cool and delicious hours of night.

I arose early next morning, impatient to begin my search for the fair Selina. Mr. Rivers, less anxious on this point, still

slept; so, leaving a message with our servant that I would return to breakfast, I sallied forth, and took the direction towards the sea, remembering that Mr. Medlicut had stated that the house occupied by the mysterious lady lay near the shore.

How bright and balmy was the morning, and how did my heart throb with renovated hope as, with agile step, I hurried along, passing nearly unnoticed many a building, fountain, or point of view, that, under other circumstances, I should have long loitered to admire! But now, every thought, every feeling, was centered in the engrossing one—a longing, impatient desire to discover and free the adorable Selina from her thraldom. So rapid was my pace that many a sauntering Sicilian stopped to look at me, muttering some remark on the *forestieri Inglesi*, who neither walked nor did anything else like other people. At length I reached the shore, and noticed no less than three

houses in its immediate vicinity, each at a considerable distance from the other, but any one of which might have answered the notion conveyed by Mr. Medlicut. A vessel lying at anchor nearly in front of one of the houses, reminded me of the statement relative to the supposed friend of the mysterious lady, and induced me to reconnoitre this dwelling more closely. It had a garden attached to it, surrounded by a high wall; and some of the windows facing the sea had iron bars, which, with the general dreary aspect, gave very much the appearance of a prison to this solitary abode. While I stood looking at it, a man in a sailor's dress opened the door, and, observing me, approached, and inquired in Italian what I wanted? I answered, that I was in search of an English lady, who, I was informed, resided in one of the houses near the beach.

“ There is no such person here,” said he, in a very dogged tone; “ and as the owner

of this house dislikes having strangers prowling around his dwelling, you will do well to withdraw."

"The owner has no right to dictate to me, while I do not enter his house or garden," replied I. "All persons may pass where I now stand, and pause to look around them, if they please."

"We shall soon see," observed he; and applying a whistle to his lips, three men in sailors' attire came forth instantly from the house, and he having spoken to them in a low tone of voice, they drew close to me, and with threatening gestures and angry voices desired me to go away. Indignant at their insolence, I felt little disposed to obey the mandate; but conscious that against four men, and in a solitary situation, removed from any hope of assistance from passers by, resistance would be unavailing, I moved away, the men remaining in front of the house as if watching me.

When I was at some distance from the dwelling, which I now became convinced was the identical one of which I was in search, I encountered a tall man of a most forbidding aspect, and with a very peculiar mode of walking. He eyed me narrowly, and, having passed on, turned his head again to look at me; but observing that I did the same by him, he resumed his route. Had I entertained any doubt, the presence of this man would have convinced me that my suspicions were well founded; for his appearance perfectly coincided with the description given by the fair Selina of the person who had carried her off from La Cava. I instantly determined to go to Mr. Rivers, and with him seek a magistrate, to demand an authority to examine the premises; and, fearful that suspicions of my intention might lead to the removal of the object of my search, I was hurrying rapidly

towards the town, when I heard the sound of horses' feet advancing in a gallop behind me, and in another instant the man 'I had seen but a few minutes before, followed by three others, came up to me.

"I wish to know," cried he, in Italian, but with an accent that proved it was not his native tongue, "why you came prowling around my house like a spy, and resisted the orders of my servants to leave the place?"

I was about to reply, when he jumped from his horse, made a sign to his followers also to dismount, and advancing to me, while one of the men held the horses of the others, he violently seized me. Two of the sailors assisted him to secure my arms behind my back, when they placed me on one of the horses, and, guarded by the party, I was led back to the sea-shore. There I perceived a boat, with two men resting on

their oars, into which, in spite of all resistance, I was soon placed; while two more men entered it, and quickly rowed off towards the vessel lying at anchor, into which I was forcibly removed, and shut up in a small cabin.

CHAPTER XIV.

ALL this had been the work of a few minutes; and as I heard from the small port-hole of the cabin the sound of the oars as the boat was rowed back to shore, the whole thing seemed to me more like a dream than a reality. And here I was, a prisoner, powerless to rescue her to whose place of captivity I had but so lately discovered a clue! To the lot which might be reserved for me by the lawless wretch who had thus made me a prisoner, I gave not a thought; so wholly was I engrossed by my anxiety for

the lovely Selina, about whose fate all that I had seen of the reckless man in whose power I felt convinced she was, occasioned me to be more than ever alarmed. What would, what could Mr. Rivers think of my sudden disappearance? How great would be his terror and anxiety! My mind was in a tumult; a thousand thoughts fraught with bitterness passed through it, all uniting with the maddening consciousness that I was a prisoner, and guarded by a force sufficient to defeat any efforts I could make to escape. Yet, strange to say, notwithstanding the agitation of my mind, after some hours I began to experience the pangs of hunger; but though I repeatedly knocked at the door of the cabin — outside which I heard a man continually moving—and called aloud, no notice was taken of me. Not until long after the clouds of night had shrouded my little prison in total darkness, was the door opened, a loaf of bread and a

flask of wine placed before me; and I was told that I might retire to rest in the rude berth in the cabin whenever I felt disposed. I asked for a light, which was rudely denied me; and my gaolers having withdrawn, I was again locked in, and left to my own painful reflections. I ate some of the coarse bread, and drank a little of the wine, which restored me, and then scrambled into the berth, when I soon fell into a deep slumber, from which I was awaked by a noise in the cabin. The total darkness precluded me from seeing; but I put forth my hand, and, to my horror and disgust, it came in contact with a living, moving substance, that rushed nimbly over the covering of my wretched berth, and scampering up my pillow, whisked its unclean tail against my face. Another and another in quick succession followed; and, to my utter dismay, I discovered that the cabin and the berth were infested by rats—animals,

above all others, the most hateful to me. I called aloud for a light; but my cries excited only the rude merriment of the brutal sailors, whose derisive laughter I could hear, as they mimicked my demand.

I covered my head with the bed-clothes as a protection from these odious animals; but judge of my disgust when I found that two or three of them had penetrated beneath the scanty covering, and were assailing me with their teeth. I jumped from the berth, dashed my horrible assailants to the floor, and searched in every corner for some weapon to defend myself from their attacks, but nothing could I find. My only resource from their invasion was to stand in the middle of the cabin, away from the sides,—up which they kept continually clambering,—to kick all those that ran over my feet, and to strike at the more hardy which attempted to climb up my legs. Never had I passed, or even conceived a notion of a

night so horrible,—and never did I so welcome the first break of day. I could now see these odious animals clamber up the table and devour the bread, of which I had partaken only a small portion the previous night; but when the daylight became more broad, they eyed me askance, and scampered away to their different hiding-places, leaving me in a state more easily to be imagined than described.

And now my prison door was opened, and two of the sailors entered. They looked at me with derision, and mockingly demanded why I cried out so much in the night. “ You, a brave *Inglese*, could surely not be afraid of such harmless things as rats, though, *Cospetto*, they do sometimes, as I dare say you have discovered, bite very sharply. Look there, signor” — and the speaker held up his hand, and shewed more than one mark from the teeth of the rats. “ But after all,” continued he, “ they do no

great damage, and their presence proves that ours is a good vessel, for these animals, more sensible than men, always know when to forsake a falling house, or a sinking ship."

"How long am I to be thus illegally detained?" demanded I.

"As long as it pleases our Capitano to keep you," was the answer.

"He has committed an act that he may yet have reason to repent," said I.

"I would not advise you to tell him so, for he cares little for law, and still less for the opinions of those who are in his power," replied the former speaker. "He has a peculiar dislike to inquisitive people, and you proved yourself to be of this class, by prowling about his habitation, so he has taken care that you shall trouble him no more on shore."

"Yes, yes, our Capitano is not a man to

permit any one to meddle with him," said another of the sailors. " He makes short work of it when he wishes to get rid of troublesome people."

" He may one day meet with those who are as revengeful and determined as himself," muttered the third sailor, a dark, dogged-looking man, with a scowling brow, and a powerful sinewy frame, who had entered the cabin while the other was speaking.

" What! because he gave you a blow yesterday?" said one of the crew.

" *Sono Romano,*" replied the scowling-looking fellow; " and a Roman forgets not a blow."

" You will learn to do so, when you are as long with our Capitano as we have been," observed the other, " for he likes to keep his hands in exercise, I can tell you."

" Talk of the evil one and he will appear,

for here comes our Capitano. All hands on deck quickly, for he will not approve of our being here, confabbing with the prisoner," said the first speaker; and all three rapidly retreated, taking care to lock the cabin door. I expected every moment that he would descend, and enter my odious prison; but though he remained on deck some time, he did not; and when I heard his boat leave the vessel, I shrank with disgust, and, to say the truth, with terror, at the notion of being another night exposed to the invasion of the abominable animals who had assailed me. A coarse meal, consisting of ship beef and biscuit, was presented to me soon after the departure of the Capitano, as he was styled, and, hunger conquering the repugnance and disgust excited by its appearance, I partook of this bad fare with an appetite often found wanting when luxurious repasts were served to me. As the

shades of evening were descending, I heard the plashing of oars alongside our boat; and through the port-hole could distinguish the voices of the sailors as they shipped the provisions, brought from the shore, on board our vessel."

" You are well laden," observed a sailor from the deck. " We are going to have a long voyage, I suppose, if I may judge from the quantity of sea stock."

" Yes, il Capitano said, we are to hold ourselves in readiness to sail the moment he comes on board, and he will be here before it is dark."

" And where are we bound for?"

" You'll know that when he tells us. I fancy he wants to take the prisoner out of the way."

" The sky looks black and threatening, and the wind is getting up; I don't half like the appearance of the weather; but we al-

ways have the luck of it when we go to sea. If he wants to get the prisoner out of the way, there is a much shorter and less troublesome mode of doing it."

"How so?" .

"Knock him on the head and throw him overboard; with enough shot to keep his body from floating."

"Just like you, always for murder."

"Better to kill one man, than to run the risk of having five or six drowned, say I, especially when I am one of the number."

"I don't think there will be much of a storm, after all."

"You'll learn, before many hours are over. Look at the mares' tails, how quick they float over the sky, and see the sea-gulls how they seem to ride the foaming crests of the waves! It was just such an evening as this that the heavy gale came on when we were taking the two ladies from near Pæstum, and what a night it turned out!"

I had listened with breathless attention to this discourse, and the last portion of it brought the conviction that the vessel I was now in was the identical one in which the lovely Selina had been taken away; as also, that the house near the shore was her present abode, and that, to prevent the discovery of which I had the clue, I was thus forcibly removed from Palermo. How did I now execrate my own rash impatience in having, alone and unarmed, attempted to trace her, by which I had placed myself in the power of the wretch who commanded this vessel, and thus lost the chance of rescuing her from his clutches. Had I been furnished with a judicial authority to search for her, and a sufficient force to carry it into effect, she might now have been in safety under the protection of Mr. Rivers and myself, while, by my rashness, the chance of delivering her was more remote than before. My life had never previously

appeared to me so valuable as now, when reflecting that it was necessary to her safety. With the knowledge I had so lately attained of him who had spirited her away, and of the place of her confinement, were I but free I could soon rescue her; but should a violent death overtake me,—and in the hands of the lawless men around me, such an event seemed by no means improbable,—who was to follow up the pursuit with that zeal and vigilance which love alone can give ?

The boat having deposited its sea-stock on board, pushed off again to shore in order to convey il Capitano to his vessel. I heard the busy note of preparation going on at every side, and felt my breast filled with rage at the anticipation of being soon carried far away from Palermo, which I was now convinced held all that was dearest to me on earth. The consciousness of my own utter helplessness in the position in which I

was placed, nearly maddened me; and so wholly engrossed my thoughts, that I was only aroused from my reverie by finding the odious animals which had tormented me during the previous night again returning to the attack.

CHAPTER XV.

THERE is something humiliating in having the sense of our corporal infirmities forced on our attention, while our minds are occupied by one absorbing thought. I experienced this, and felt more than half ashamed at the consciousness that while my heart owned the most intense passion for an object so every way worthy to excite it, I could even for a moment forget her, in the sensations of horror and disgust excited by those odious animals, the rats. I used my utmost efforts to repel their contact, and heard many a squeak as I kicked at them.

The Capitano now arrived, and ere he left the boat, loudly demanded whether Geronimo had returned? Being assured that he had not — “Then he has fled, and with no good intention,” observed he. “He is a traitor, I am sure, and has gone to betray us. Let us immediately set sail, and so foil the villain’s plans.”

The boat was instantly hoisted and secured, the anchor weighed, the sails unfurled, and I felt the vessel heave and stagger, as, impelled by the wind, which had now greatly increased, she reeled along, the spray already dashing against her sides with a loud sound, and falling in showers over her bulwarks.

“We are going to have a heavy gale, Capitano,” said one of the sailors.

“And what if we are?” replied the captain. “Would you have us remain tossing in the bay all night, you stupid brute? And do you not know that the vessel is

much safer away from the land, and with plenty of sea room? But all you Italians are cowards, and if you had your own way would never go out of sight of land."

I heard the sailor mutter a curse between his teeth, while the captain, who had taken the helm, issued his orders with a sternness, mingling them with oaths, that proved he did not seek to conciliate the good will of his myrmidons. The vessel had cleared the port; the wind getting every moment stronger, and the waves lashed into fury by it, when a ship was seen following in our wake, every sail crowded; and she gained on us so fast, that the captain cried out that he believed we were pursued.

"Put on every rag of canvas we have," exclaimed he; "for I would rather sink the vessel than allow her to be boarded."

"Steady the helm," cried the second in command, "and mind her head."

"How many knots are we making?"

“ Nine, or thereabouts.”

“ Then, by Jove, we shall be caught!” and curses loud and deep followed this speech.

The wind was now blowing a perfect hurricane, and the waves dashed over the weather side of the vessel, and penetrated into the cabin and hold.

“ Reef the mainsail,” screamed il Capitano; and scarcely had the order been complied with, when “ Haul in the mainsail” followed. The vessel was driven before the wind, at one moment mounting the mighty waves that threatened to overwhelm her, and the next sinking, as if stunned and powerless, into the deep trough of waters, whence it appeared impossible she should ever rise again. Every plank creaked as if in agony, while the sounds of the fitful gusts of wind that flapped and rent the sails, mingled with the roaring of the white crested waves that struck the vessel until it

reeled, and staggered like a helpless thing tormented by demons. The sounds of a voice issuing from a speaking-trumpet were now heard, as the pursuing vessel approached nearer to us; but the wind and waves drowned the words. My heart beat rapidly, for the notion that the ship, the appearance of which so much discomposed il Capitano, might bring freedom to me, darted through my brain. But quickly did the sense of my danger chase all hope. Shut up as I was, without the power of rushing on deck, the vessel might be sunk if borne down on by the pursuing one, without a chance being afforded me of making a struggle to escape. The rats, with the pre-science of danger often attributed to them, now became more bold than ever, and ran towards every corner to seek an egress from the cabin; their squeaks rising in proportion to the increased external noise. Maddened by the contact of these loathsome

animals, which not even a sense of the danger of my position could make me forget, I rushed towards the door, and dashed myself furiously against it, in the hope of bursting it open, when the vessel lurched violently, and that which my weight failed to effect, was now achieved by the shock the ship had experienced. The door flew open, and I fell headlong on the companion, the rats rushing over my body in their eagerness to get on deck. When I ascended, all was confusion, and il Capitano and his crew were so occupied at their different posts, that my presence was unnoticed. I saw the pursuing ship gaining rapidly on us, and expected that in a very short time she would be alongside our vessel, in which case I determined to jump overboard, and trust to Providence for my preservation.

“Go below instantly,” said il Capitano to a sailor, whose ferocious countenance I had formerly marked, “and bring the pri-

somer on deck. Fly ! there is not a moment to be lost. He must be thrown overboard before yonder ship is close enough to save him, for should he be found in our vessel, the worst consequences will ensue.” I cast one rapid glance towards the fast approaching ship, and mentally recommending myself to the protection of Heaven, jumped overboard, before the sailor sent to execute his brutal captain’s orders had time to seize me. I felt the white and hissing foam open as a grave to me, penetrated the dark green abyss beneath it, and in an instant, as if impelled by some irresistible force, I was raised and flung forward by a mighty wave, and again sank, as I thought, to rise no more. An eternity of thought was crowded into this brief span. The past and the present flashed through my brain with the velocity of lightning, and the love of life, inherent in every heart, led me to make a desperate effort for the preservation of mine.

To swim amid such waves I felt would be impossible; but when I once more rose to the surface of the sea, I endeavoured to float, and was borne on the waves, now mounting and then descending as they rushed rapidly on, but no more sinking beneath them. I heard two pistol shots following quickly on each other, fired from the vessel I had left, but neither of them touched me, though it was clear from the nearness that I was the object aimed at. The waves fortunately bore me in the direction of the pursuing ship, close to which I was now approaching, when the dread of being carried beneath it by the impetuosity of the current, led me to cry out as loudly as I could for succour. In a moment a rope was thrown out to me from the deck, which after a few efforts I seized, and clinging to it with all my strength, was drawn to the side of the vessel, two or three men having been let down in the mean time, and

secured to the ship's side, in order to assist me, exhausted as I now was, to enter the ship. I lost all consciousness in the arms of my deliverers, and for many hours remained nearly in a death-like state.

When I again became sensible, I learned that the vessel I had escaped from had gone to pieces two hours after I had left it, owing to having ran against another ship, and that not a soul on board had been saved. The sailor, who, irritated by the brutality of il Capitano, had ran away at Palermo, had given information to the civil authority at that place, that an Englishman had been kidnapped, and carried off ; and Mr. Rivers, assisted by Mr. Medlicut, had instituted a search for me in all directions, and offered a large reward for my rescue, which induced the worthy magistrates and police of Palermo to make more than usual efforts to accomplish this point. An armed vessel, on board of which was the man who had

betrayed il Capitano, had been despatched to give chase to that in which I was a captive; and would, on coming near it, have instantly fired on and brought it to, had the commander not feared to risk my safety. The sailor, who knew the reckless brutality of il Capitano and his crew, expected that I should be poniarded and thrown overboard, whenever his late master saw that escape was impossible; so he kept a close look out on the vessel, saw me jump overboard, beheld the Capitano aim two shots at me, while I was buffeting with the waves, and threw out the rope, by the aid of which, under Divine Providence, my life was saved.

My first question on recovering the use of my faculties was whether this man had also given information to the magistrate relative to the present abode of the young lady forcibly carried off from the neighbourhood of Pæstum.

“Signor, no!” replied he, “there was no reward offered for her, so I did not touch on the subject.”

I turned from this mercenary brute with disgust, and he noticing my emotion said, “Now that the Signor is free, and will be at Palermo so soon, he knows where to find the Signorina without any assistance from me, but I hope he will think me entitled to some additional reward for having saved his life.”

“Reveal to me what you think was the motive that led il Capitano to take off the young lady,” asked I. “Be frank, and above all things, speak the truth!”

“*Si Signor, si, sono Romano*, and I always speak the truth, except when it is my interest not so to do. I believe il Capitano was employed by the elderly Signora to get possession of the young Signorina, whom she wished to keep in her custody. *He*, I verily believe, would have

preferred getting rid of the Signorina by foul play, for somehow or other he seemed to dislike her greatly, had he not been in dread of the elderly Signora, who supplied him with money, and who attached great importance to having the Signorina in her power. We had been cruising about a few days in the Bay of Naples, where il Capitano left us for a time; and when he returned, he was disguised in a whimsical manner, and we sailed for Salerno, in the bay of which we anchored,—keeping always a scout or two on shore, who had emissaries, to bring information from the neighbouring towns and villages. When the elderly Signora had been two or three days at Salerno, one evening our scout learned that the person il Capitano was in search of had arrived there, and was to go on to Paestum next day. It was instantly arranged that the Signora should proceed to that place, and our vessel sail there;

anchor as near shore as was safe, and send a boat to lie under the rocks until il Capitano joined it. The rest, you know—your presence and that of the elderly Signora, and servants with you, embarrassed il Capitano very much; and I heard him swear that if an opportunity offered, he would get rid for ever of meddling fools, who crossed his schemes, and rendered their execution so difficult.

“You have doubtlessly learned that soporific drugs were administered to your servants, and to the postillions in the house at Pæstum, by il Capitano, who mixed them in their wine, with the connivance of the owner of that wretched abode, who also concealed him under the straw when you searched for him. The rest you already know—the ladies were taken on board the vessel you lately escaped from, the young Signorina, weeping and lamenting her fate nearly all the voyage, in spite of the con-

solation offered by the Signora, who endeavoured to reconcile her to her lot, and who lavished many marks of affection on her.

“We had a very severe gale on our voyage, but weathered it well, and reached Palermo safely, whence the Signorina was conveyed to the house near the sea shore, wandering around which you were detected, and on your retreat were encountered, and taken prisoner, by il Capitano. I vowed that I would have my revenge on him; and I have kept my oath. *Sono Romano*, Signor, and Romans always keep their promises. When the ship went to pieces, he boldly stemmed the waves, and made for this vessel. Some of the crew saw him, one moment borne on the crest of a high wave, and the next disappearing as it descended. They were for throwing out a rope to him, as in your case, and did, in spite of my advice to the contrary. He grasped it as only drowning men do any object that

offers a chance of safety, and was drawn close to the vessel's side. I stood there, our eyes met, though the waves between whiles beat over his face—he touched the ladder, and in another moment would have been saved, when I, remembering his brutality and insults to me—a Roman, struck him a violent blow on the head, with an oar I held in my hand, which caused him instantly to let go his grasp of the rope. He sank, but rose again, for a second; and in that brief interval gave me a glance, in which hate, bitter, burning hate, and despair, were depicted, then disappeared to rise no more! I shall remember that look to my dying hour. It froze my blood, and made me wish I had not struck the blow that caused his death: but *sono Romano*, he had wronged and insulted me, and my heart panted for vengeance. I have had it, but it is less sweet than I had imagined it to be, for somehow or other, that last glance

of his is continually recurring to my mind, and I cannot look at the sea without expecting to see his ghastly face, and rolling eyeballs, in the last agony of despair and death, scowling at me."

CHAPTER XVI.

AND now I once more stood on the shore of Palermo! O! the joy of that moment; my heart beating high at the prospect of soon beholding the lovely Selina, and of restoring her again to the worthy Madame de Stourville. Mr. Rivers, accompanied by Mr. Medlicut, met me before I had walked many paces, and never had I previously seen him so much moved, as he again and again clasped me in his arms, and anxiously examined my countenance.

“ You look fatigued, and must feel so,

my dear friend," said Mr. Rivers. "Let us go to the inn, that you may seek the repose of which you seem to stand so much in need."

In a few words I told Mr. Rivers, that having now discovered where Miss Somers was concealed, I could have no repose until I had released her from her prison. Attended by Mr. Medlicut, we instantly walked off to the house near the sea-shore; and as we approached it, my heart throbbing with emotion, Mr. Medlicut observed, "Why, there's the house of Mrs.—, what is her name? It is really too bad of me always to be forgetting names! Mrs.—; Mrs.—; no I can't remember; but I mean the mysterious English lady, who has excited so much curiosity at Palermo!"

We knocked several times at the door before it was opened; but at length a woman appeared, and informed us that la Signora and Signorina had left the house

two days before, and she knew not where they were gone, nor if they meant to return. I refused to believe a statement that filled me with alarm and anger, and chilled in an instant the hopes that a few minutes before were glowing so warmly in my heart. She, however, offered to let us see the house at once; and so convince ourselves that her statement was correct. I hurried through all the rooms, until I reached that which bore indications of having been inhabited by the fair Selina. The windows of this chamber had iron bars, and the door strong bolts on the exterior. A few Italian books were scattered on the table, and some pencil sketches lay near them. I looked on the drawings, and all doubt of their being Selina's vanished, when I saw that each of them represented the scenes which we had visited together. Some views of la Cava, a spirited sketch of Salerno, and another of the Temples at

Pæstum, struck me at once, by their perfect verisimilitude ; but when, on examining them more closely, I saw a male figure, evidently meant for myself, introduced in each of the drawings, how did my heart beat !

The woman, in answer to our inquiries, informed us that la Signora and her daughter had set off so unexpectedly, that they had hardly had time to pack up some clothes for the journey. An hour before il Capitano had got into his boat to go on board his ship, he had been busy destroying papers. “*La Madre* could not console la Signorina,” added the woman, “for she was never seen to smile since she had been brought from Italy. It was hard to be kept a prisoner as la Signorina was ; but *la Madre* spent most of the day with, and appeared fond of her.”

“Did il Capitano see la Signorina?” inquired Mr. Medlicut—a question I longed,

but had not courage to ask, so unwilling was I that those present should notice my emotion.

“No, Signor! he never approached the chamber of la Signorina, nor partook of the repasts prepared for her and *la Madre*. He lived in an apartment in a remote part of the house, and was separately served with all that he required.”

This piece of intelligence removed a weight from my mind; for it was a great consolation to know that she had not been subjected to the annoyance of an association with the odious Capitano. Who could this mysterious woman, who called herself the mother of Selina, be? That lovely girl had herself told me that she had never known a mother’s care; and now, in a foreign land, a total stranger starts up, gains possession of her person by unfair means, and keeps her a prisoner! All this

was so strange and incomprehensible, that the more I reflected on it, the less could I develope the mystery.

" You will now, I hope, return with me to our hotel," said Mr. Rivers, disturbing the reverie into which I had fallen ; " for you have need of rest and refreshment."

" You would much oblige us, Mr. Medlicut," said Mr. Rivers, " by gaining all the information possible relative to the English lady who lately inhabited this house. Her name, connexions, in short, all that is known of her, for we are much interested in the subject."

" Her name—nothing is more simple ! I have it at my fingers' ends—have heard it often—have seen it in her letter of credit. Her name is Mrs.— ; Mrs.— ; how stupid of me to forget it ! Never was there such a bad memory for names as mine is. Let me see, it begins with an L. Yes ; I am

sure L is the first letter! Lester, is it? No; Lindsell. Yes—yes—now I have it; her name is Lindsell!"

Mr. Rivers instantly made a note of it in his pocket-book.

"Did you know the man who commanded the vessel in which Mr. Meredith was a prisoner; and who, it appears, acted as the agent of Mrs. Lindsell?" inquired Mr. Rivers.

"I have seen him occasionally in the streets; but had no personal acquaintance with him. His name, too, I have heard. I think it was Moranville. Yes; it was Moranville. He was not an Englishman, although he spoke English very well. It was said he came from Cuba; yes, Cuba was the place. I remember it, because some one told me that he had some famous cigars that he brought with him from the Havannah, and that he spoke often of Cuba."

Mr. Rivers made another note.

"As that man has been drowned, it will, I think, be requisite to have his property and papers secured," said Mr. Rivers. "The latter may throw some light on the recent illegal transactions in which he has taken so active a part. This investigation must be executed by, or in the presence of, a magistrate; and you will much oblige me, Mr. Medlicut, by having it done."

The woman in the house being questioned, pointed out the apartment of il Capitano; but declared that he always took the key with him wherever he went. So anxious was I to obtain some information that might furnish a clue to the motives that led to his mysterious conduct with regard to Selina, and disclose the cause of the part taken in it by Mrs. Lindsell, that I induced Mr. Rivers to remain in the house until the civil authority sent a proper person to have the room of the late Capitano forced open.

Mr. Medlicut obligingly went himself to the magistrate, and in a short time, two persons authorized by him arrived, and with the assistance of a locksmith, opened the door. To our great disappointment, however, not a single document was found. The hearth was covered with fragments of burnt papers, not one of which contained a legible word; in the drawer of a desk three or four pair of false whiskers, mustachios, and wigs of various colours, were found, which had evidently been intended as disguises. Some boots and shoes were also discovered, with one heel of each pair much higher than the other; a disparity evidently meant either to conceal a lameness, or to give the effect of being lame. The stratagem reminded me of Selina's description of the peculiarity of the walk of the man who had carried her off from la Cava; but who could never more molest her. He was called away to his last account, with

no time to repent or atone for his sins; and though the suddenness and manner of his death shocked me, it nevertheless was a consolation, that henceforth the object dearest to me on earth was freed from his desperate snares and reckless schemes against her liberty.

I possessed myself of the drawings of Selina, unseen by any one, placed them in my breast, and then left the house, determined to have persons dispatched in every direction in search of Mrs. Lindsell and the treasure of which she had so unfairly possessed herself.

Mr. Medlicut lent us every assistance with the magistrates, by whom it was evi-
~~much~~ much esteemed. Of course he made strange blunders about the names of those connected with the affair in question; either totally forgetting, or wholly changing them, much to the amusement of all present in the office of the magistrate, to

whom his defective memory seemed to be well known. Nevertheless, he so far succeeded in carrying our wishes into effect, that before night several men were sent off in different quarters to search for Mrs. Lindsell; and hopes were held out to us that in a few days we might calculate on receiving intelligence of the success of their exertions, if that lady was still in Sicily.

Mr. Rivers and I had so many questions to ask each other, that we were glad to find ourselves again *tête-à-tête*. I could have embraced him, as he declared that he considered it a duty positively incumbent on us, to leave no means untried, to discover the place of Miss Somers's concealment, and to restore her once more to the ~~protector~~ of Madame de Stourville; whose helplessness and want of knowledge of the world, however much to be deplored as incapacitating her for the task she had undertaken, were in some degree compensated by

her excellent principles, and extreme attachment to her *élève*. The justly merited commendations he bestowed on the lovely Selina, found a ready echo in my breast; and I was never more convinced of the excellence of his judgment, and refinement of his taste, than when he had uttered them.

When I found myself that night in a clean and airy chamber, and reposing on a comfortable bed, I could not forbear congratulating myself on the contrast both afforded to my wretched prison and berth on board the vessel of il Capitano. Yet this very same chamber and bed had only a few nights previously struck me as being far inferior to the accommodation that might be expected in so large a city as Palermo, and at all events much inferior to the apartment I occupied at Naples. How pleasant it was to feel assured that my slumbers would not be broken by the odious and dis-

gusting animals that had assailed me in my prison; and that the next morning I should awake to liberty and sunshine, free to renew my search for her whose lovely image was the last that floated in my mind, as my eyes closed in sleep, and mingled in my dreams when I had sunk into the repose which my fatigue, and previous nights of watching, had rendered so requisite to recruit my nearly exhausted frame.

CHAPTER XVII.

WHEN I awoke next morning, my servant informed me that a rude and ill-looking man, in a sailor's dress, desired to see me. "If I might be so bold, sir," cried he; "I would take the liberty of advising you not to see this man; he seems to be a desperate fellow; and when I told him you were asleep and could not be disturbed, he got into a passion, said he must, and would see you, that he was a Roman, and would not be trifled with. He drew himself up, sir, when he said he was a Roman, just for all

the world as if he said he was a king; which—only I did not like to provoke him, he looked so fierce—would have made me laugh, for I remembered the half-naked set of fellows I used to see when we were at Rome, and thought that surely there was nothing to be proud of in being a Roman."

"Send up this man directly," said I.

"Had I not better call Mr. Rivers's servant, sir, and have him to stay outside the door with me while this ill-looking sailor is in your room?"

"No, there is no occasion; send up the man immediately."

My orders were obeyed, but the alarm visible in my servant's face, when he left my chamber, proved either a strong attachment to my person, or a great dread of compromising the safety of his own.

"I am here, Signor, to offer my services to you," said the sailor. "I have heard that a reward has been offered to any one

who will discover the abode of la Signorina, whom I assisted il Capitano in capturing near Pæstum, and I am willing to earn it. *Sono Romano*, signor, and if I say I will discover her place of concealment, you may trust me I will do it. Am I, for this said reward, expected to do aught more than discover where she is? I am thus particular, for if it be required that I should bring the Signorina to you, be assured that, dead or alive, she shall be brought. *Sono Romano*, signor; and a Roman never breaks an engagement."

I shuddered as I heard these last words, and the ferocious and determined look of this hardened man rendered their sense still more alarming. "Should any injury befall the young lady, you will forfeit the reward," answered I.

"But if the elderly Signora, who lacks not money or servitors, should make a vigorous resistance to my efforts to rescue

la Signorina from their hands, would you prefer my leaving her to them, and incurring the disgrace of a defeat, to risking her life, and in all probability losing it? *Sono Romano*, Signor, and defeat to me would be terrible."

" You are to employ some men on whom you can depend, in searching on every side to discover where the Signorina is kept confined; when you have effected this object, guard the house so that she cannot be removed from it; and despatch a person to me forthwith, and I will come with a regular and legal force to deliver her."

" It is well, Signor, you shall be faithfully obeyed, and I hope soon to send you good tidings;" and away he strode, with the air of a man determined to accomplish what he had undertaken.

Mr. Rivers and I having determined on remaining at Palermo until the place of concealment of Miss Somers was discovered,

Mr. Medlicut proposed our employing an acquaintance of his as a cicerone; and though I would have preferred being left to the indulgence of my own reflections, instead of going a round of sight-seeing, when my thoughts were wholly occupied by one object, I consented to the proposition in order to amuse Mr. Rivers. We commenced with the cathedral, erected by an Englishman, Archbishop Walter; it was invested with greater interest to us on that account. The beautiful tracery exhibited on the exterior, and the gates with their archivolt mouldings and sculptured spanrels pleased us, but the general effect of the building is much deteriorated by the cupolas that crown its turrets. We next proceeded to the Royal Palace, which contains some good rooms and fine pictures. In the armory we were shewn the sword of the celebrated Count Roger, the dimensions

of which reminded one of the lines descriptive of that of William Wallace,—

“The sword that seem’d fit for an archangel to wield
Was light in his terrible hand,”

and proves the strength of the Norman’s arm. The small church of St. Peter, with its subterranean chapel, and exquisite mosaics, offers some fine specimens of Saracenic splendour; but each and all of the objects I beheld, however worthy of attention, failed to divert my mind from the one point which wholly engrossed it.

On the fourth day a messenger arrived from the Roman who had been dispatched to obtain intelligence of the lovely Selina. Too illiterate to write, he had employed one of his friends to convey to me the tidings that he had at length discovered the retreat of la Signora and la Signorina, who were concealed in a villa in the neighbourhood of Catania, with one female and

six male attendants. He pledged himself not to leave the spot until my arrival, which he urged should be as speedy as possible, and advised my being accompanied by an armed force to meet the resistance that would in all probability be offered by the servants of la Signora, who were well armed, and men of desperate characters.

We immediately applied to the magistrate, who furnished us with a legal authority to obtain possession of the person of Miss Somers, and an escort of police to enforce it, and having provided ourselves with a *lettiga* for her accommodation, we set out. Though we travelled as expeditiously as we could, it was not until the evening of the second day that we reached Catania. The messenger dispatched to Palermo by my emissary served as a guide to the villa, which was seven or eight miles distant from the town. The route to it was almost impassable for any but the horses of the

country, and totally so for carriages, but it presented some views of wild and picturesque scenery, which under other circumstances I should have had pleasure in beholding. It wound sometimes through woods, interspersed with huge rocks half overgrown by moss, and at others through fertile vineyards; the wild aloe and prickly pear-trees, so abundant in Sicily, raising their picturesque heads high above the trees and plants that surrounded them. Large chasms, half hid by the parasitical plants that spread over them, proclaimed the volcanic nature of the soil; and the huge rocks scattered at a distance, bore evidence that their expulsion had left these voids which we remarked in the sultry earth.

A rude hamlet, consisting of some half dozen cottages and a wretched looking *osteria*, terminated the route; and adjoining it, but separated by a high wall, stood the villa in the midst of its own grounds.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE master of the *osteria*, as well as the other uncouth looking inhabitants of the hamlet, betrayed considerable symptoms of alarm at the appearance of the police. They shrunk away as if fearful for themselves, and were only reassured when my emissary, the Roman, greeted our arrival by rushing from the house, and proclaimed us to be the friends he had been expecting.

“They are safe, Signor,” said he, “in yonder villa. I only promised to discover, not to deliver them up. I have watched

them day and night lest they should escape; and whatever may be the sum you think proper to give me, over and above the stipulated reward, and I doubt not but that a Signor Inglesi—so generous as all of your nation are said to be—will reward me well, I may say with truth that I have merited it. You know not, Signor, what I have had to undergo. Living at night concealed beneath the trees on the damp ground until my bones ached, and scorched by the burning sun in the days, my eyes fixed on the villa. Then the wine in this wretched *osteria* is abominable, and resembles nothing but vinegar. Yes, yes, Signor, *sono Romano*; what I engage to do, that I do; and no one can impeach the honour of Giovanni Bartiluzi."

We left our horses at the *osteria*, and, led by Giovanni, proceeded to the villa. Having knocked at the gate, the porter drew back a sliding board, through which he was en-

abled to reconnoitre us, and demanded our business. The police officer told him that he must instantly give us admittance, or take the consequence of disobeying the law, at the same time shewing him the warrant. After reflecting for a short time, he opened a door by the side of the gate, and we entered what had once been a pleasure-ground, but which was now a wild mass of shrubs and trees intermingled with flowering plants, the gravel walk which led through it being overgrown with rank grass and briars. The porter left his lodge, which was close to the gate, and accompanied us to the house, through a path of tangled shrubs, long grass, flowers, and weeds. The moon shone bright on the vestibule and marble colonnade, which formed the entrance of the villa, the chaste and beautiful architecture of which, seen through the lofty stone pines and cedars, had a beautiful effect. A white marble terrace extended along the front,

with large sculptured vases of the same costly material, placed at intervals on pedestals, and a fountain in the centre threw up its silvery showers towards the dark blue sky, gemming the odorous orange trees around it with its widely-spread pearls.

And this was the dwelling of the lovely Selina; — meet temple for such a divinity! How my heart throbbed as I ascended the steps, and anticipated that in a few minutes I should behold her. We rang the bell repeatedly before any one appeared to answer the summons. At length a window above the door was opened, and a person demanded our business. The police officer displayed his warrant, and required instant admittance in the name of the law; declaring that, if it was denied, he would by force obtain it. After some hesitation, the door was opened by two servants, four more standing near; who, in answer to our desire to see the Signora, led us through a suite of

rooms, in the most remote of which we found the lady seated. Although she endeavoured to maintain a calm and unconcerned demeanour, it was evident that she was under the influence of fear and anxiety, for there was a considerable degree of trepidation in her manner. She was tall and slight, and her age seemed to be about forty-five or fifty.

“ How am I to account for this intrusion?” said she, in Italian, addressing herself to the officer of the police; and had I previously entertained any doubt of her identity, her voice would have convinced me that the lady who had forced herself on us at Pæstum was now before me. The thick veil and large cloak, worn by her on that occasion, so effectually concealed her features and figure, that I might have been unable to recognise her; but her voice removed all doubt. The officer having shewn her his authority, she demanded, with an

air of proud and stern defiance, how long it was that the Sicilian laws interfered between a mother and her child?"

"But we deny that the young lady, of whose person you have surreptitiously obtained possession, is your child," replied the officer.

"I can, however, prove that she is; and consequently I have a right to retain her."

"That right you must establish before our court of law at Palermo; and my duty is, to conduct you and the young lady you allege to be your daughter, to that place."

"But if I refuse to obey this mandate?"—and the speaker drew herself up to her utmost height, and looked disdainfully around her.

"Why then I shall be under the disagreeable necessity of using force to convey you there."

"And will two English gentlemen see a countrywoman thus insulted?" said Mrs.

Lindsell, giving an appealing glance to Mr. Rivers and me.

“ No Englishman can abet or advise resistance to the law of any country in which he may happen to be,” replied Mr. Rivers; “ and as we stand here as the friends of Miss Somers, and are authorized by the lady under whose protection her father placed her to assist in her restoration to her, we are much more disposed to forward the proceedings instituted to effect that purpose, than to do anything to retard them.”

“ I must remind the Signora that we are losing time,” said the officer of police, “ and must request her to prepare immediately to accompany us to Palermo. The young lady, also, must appear, that these gentlemen may identify her previous to our setting out.”

Mrs. Lindsell looked vexed and mortified, and, after a moment’s pause, said, “ You surely will not think of compelling ladies to

travel at night. My daughter is indisposed, and a journey on horseback, exposed to the night air, might have a very injurious effect on her."

"Let the Signorina immediately appear!" said the officer. A command uttered in so peremptory a manner, that Mrs. Lindsell thought it most prudent to comply with it, and instantly sent a servant to summon the young lady. How my heart throbbed when the door of the apartment again opened, and Selina, the lovely Selina, entered! On beholding me she uttered a faint cry, and with extended arms advanced to meet me; but recollecting herself, she paused for a moment, and, covered with blushes, offered me her hand, saying, "Oh! Mr. Meredith, is it indeed you—and dear Mr. Rivers!" extending a hand to him. A passionate burst of tears impeded her utterance. Never had she appeared so lovely in my eyes as at that moment. Her beautiful face bathed

in tears, that expressed more eloquently than words her satisfaction at seeing us; and though not disposed to be vain, how much of the cause of that satisfaction did I appropriate to my own share. Mr. Rivers continued to hold her hand in his, as he whispered assurances that her safety should now be secured; while Mrs. Lindsell bit her lip, and betrayed various other symptoms of impatience and displeasure at this apparent good understanding between Selina and Mr. Rivers. “This, then, is the young lady of whom you have been in search, gentlemen?” inquired the officer; and on our answering in the affirmative, he asked if we could identify the Signora as the lady who had abetted in forcibly seizing the Signorina on the road near Pæstum? To which question we also replied in the affirmative. Selina having now become more calm, and her blushes having subsided, I observed that she had grown thinner and much more pale

than she had been wont to be. Her eyes, too, looked languid and heavy, and her whole appearance—now that the first emotion of joyful surprise at seeing her friends had passed away—indicated a delicate state of health.

“Is this lady your mother, Signorina?” demanded the officer.

Selina paused a moment before she replied; Mrs. Lindsell, with a countenance full of anxiety, looking at her earnestly.

“She says so,” answered the lovely girl, glancing timidly at us.

“But have I not convinced you that I am!” demanded Mrs. Lindsell. “Recollect yourself, Selina; you will hereafter regret having thrown the least doubt on the near and dear relationship in which we stand to each other.”

“I know not what to believe, or what to say,” murmured the innocent girl, turning to Mr. Rivers. “If this lady be indeed my

mother, as she asserts, it would greatly grieve me to appear undutiful, or to give her pain, but as, until I saw her, I never heard that my mother lived, and that my father never named her to me, I cannot, without other proofs, be satisfied that she is my parent."

"Cruel girl," said Mrs. Lindsell, "thus to torture a mother's heart," and she applied her cambric handkerchief to her eyes. Selina immediately went to her, and taking her hand, said with the utmost gentleness, "Forgive me for having pained you, indeed it is most unwillingly; but all appears so new, so strange to me, that I cannot yet believe that I have found a mother. When all that is now so mysterious shall be explained, and that it is proved that you indeed stand in that relation to me, you shall find all the duty, all the affection, a daughter ought to feel for a mother." The paleness and general air

of indisposition which hung around Selina, induced Mr. Rivers and me to request the officer not to insist on the ladies' removal that night, and after some difficulty he consented to our wishes; specifying at the same time that although the Signora and Signorina might enjoy the uninterrupted privacy of their chambers, he must apprise them, that the doors must be guarded, to prevent the possibility of escape."

"Were my friend here I should not be exposed to insult," said Mrs. Lindsell, looking daggers at the officer.

"If you refer to il Capitano," replied he, somewhat spitefully, "*he* can no more be the accomplice in your schemes, for he has gone to render an account of his transgressions, in another world, instead of suffering, as he inevitably would have done, for them in this."

"What mean you?" demanded Mrs. Lindsell, starting to her feet.

"He is no more, Signora; he perished in the wicked enterprise in which he had embarked, for the purpose of removing this gentleman," pointing to me, "from Palermo; when he knew his interference and protection might have shielded the Signorina from the machinations of her enemies."

"I will not believe that he is dead!" exclaimed Mrs. Lindsell, looking incredulously at the officer.

"You will do just as you please, Signora," answered he, "but if you doubt my assertion, you will perhaps be more disposed to credit these gentlemen," bowing to Mr. Rivers and myself, "who can confirm what I have stated."

Selina involuntarily clasped her hands, as if in thankfulness; then, turning still paler than before, she shuddered, and murmured, "So sudden! so unprepared to die! Oh! it is dreadful!" I noticed the expression of Mrs. Lindsell's countenance at this moment,

and it bore so little appearance of sympathy with the feelings of the lovely and gentle Selina, that I turned from the contemplation to dwell on the beautiful face of the former; which, like a crystal vase filled with sparkling water, permitted the pure element within to be revealed.

"Is that terrible man indeed dead?" asked Selina, turning to me.

"Yes, positively, certainly. You have nothing more to dread from him."

"And you, you also have suffered from his wicked plots, and for me too!" And oh! what a look of gratitude beamed in her beautiful eyes! Mrs. Lindsell evinced strong symptoms of impatience as she observed the confidential terms on which we were conversing; and, evidently for the purpose of interrupting it, told Selina that "it was time to retire for the night, and prepare for the journey of the morrow. These gentlemen," said she, "must need refreshment; and

if I may still give orders in my own house, I shall instruct my people to serve some in the *salle à manger*."

So saying, she bowed coldly and haughtily to Mr. Rivers and me, while Selina shook hands cordially with us both, and then returning to Mrs. Lindsell's side, left the chamber with her, followed by the officer of police, and three of his assistants, who, having satisfied themselves that there were no other means of ingress to or egress from the chambers of the ladies, established sentinels at the doors, there to remain during the night.

CHAPTER XIX.

WHEN left alone with Mr. Rivers, his first exclamation to me was, "Never did I behold mother and daughter who bore so little resemblance to each other as Mrs. Lindsell and Miss Somers. They are so totally dissimilar, that I cannot bring myself to believe that so near a relationship, if any, exists between them. Be assured, there is some mystery in this, which we must, if possible, fathom; for the fact that, through any motives, Mrs. Lindsell should be induced to act in concert with such a man as il

Capitano, proves that she is very unfit to be the companion or guardian of our charming young friend. And yet, when I recall the disclosures made by Madame de Stourville, of the charge given her by Mr. Somers, not to let his daughter form acquaintance or mix with any persons whatsoever during their residence in Italy, it appears to me that he must have dreaded some discovery or attempt to obtain either an influence over the young lady or to get possession of her person. Why should he dread this, if he knew his own right to be indisputable? and why trust so precious a charge to so incompetent a person to guard it as our good, but helpless Madame de Stourville?"

The justice of these reflections alarmed and disturbed me; and it appeared doubtful whether Mr. Somers or Mrs. Lindsell had the best founded claim to the lovely being, whose relationship to either could only,

from what we knew of them, be a source of annoyance and discomfort to herself. How many painful thoughts passed through my mind during that long and sleepless night, all pregnant with melancholy forebodings for the future destiny of the fair creature dearest to me on earth. Of what avail was the possession of a large fortune, and the power of selecting a wife for myself, if I could not share that fortune with Selina, and free her from all control, save that of an adoring husband. Mr. Somers might have other views, and so refuse to grant my suit for her. He was, from what Madame de Stourville had stated, a man of mystery; and we had no clue to discover more of him than he wished to be known. Should he, indeed, establish his right to Selina, what reason had we to hope that her happiness would be his object? and as to Mrs. Lindsell, all that we knew of her was little calculated to give us confidence

that the fate of the fair young girl would be a fortunate one in her hands.

At an early hour the next morning we were on our route to Palermo. Miss Somers in the *lettiga* we had had the precaution to bring for her use, and Mrs. Lindsell in one that appertained to herself; the police force attending, and Mr. Rivers and myself, riding one at each side of the vehicle that contained Miss Somers.

After a tedious journey we reached Palermo in safety, and immediately presented ourselves, with our charge, before the magistrate. Mrs. Lindsell, when questioned, declared that Selina was her child; and added, that, separated soon after the birth of her daughter from her husband, he had taken her infant from her, and detained her ever since; that, actuated by a mother's fondness, she had continually kept a person to watch over the movements of her child, and, if possible, to snatch her from a

father who loved her not, to restore her to her arms; but that so cautiously had she been guarded, that no opportunity had ever been afforded for carrying her off during the seventeen years that had elapsed; but that ascertaining that she had been consigned to the care of a French lady to travel in Italy, all the mother's tenderness and longing desire to regain her daughter had revived in her heart, and she considered herself justified in the means she had employed to effect this purpose.

“ But have you any proofs to establish your assertion that this young lady is your daughter?” demanded the magistrate.

“ The certificate of her baptism is, with other important documents, in a casket in the desk of the house I lately occupied in the environs of this city.”

“ Let the desk or the casket be brought here immediately!” said the magistrate;

and two officers of the police were instantly dispatched in search of it.

Although Mrs. Lindsell still struggled to retain her self-possession, it was evident that she was ill at ease, and felt wounded at the reserve evinced towards her by Selina —a reserve that was well calculated to impress all present with a doubt of her being really the mother of the young and lovely being, whose presence had excited so lively an interest for her in the hearts of the spectators.

In due time the two officers of the police returned, and stated that they had found the desk referred to broken open, with no casket or papers to be found in it.

“ Then I have been plundered, treacherously plundered!” exclaimed Mrs. Lindsell, her countenance betraying the strongest symptoms of anger and alarm.

“ The person left in charge of the house

declares, that after the Signora and Signorina had departed from it, il Capitano went to the chamber of la Signora, and having secured the door of it, remained some time there. When he quitted it, the woman went in, and discovered that the desk had been forced, and its contents taken away; and she further declares that il Capitano was the person who did it."

"The wretch! the monster!" murmured Mrs. Lindsell, turning very pale.

"That wretch and monster, Signora, as you call him, is now no more. The report of his death has been well authenticated; but it is unfortunate, to say no worse of it, that a lady should have employed so unworthy an agent in concerns of such a delicate nature, and should permit a man to be domiciled beneath her roof who could take so base an advantage of her confidence."

Mrs. Lindsell's cheeks glowed with the blushes of wounded pride, and her eyes

sought the ground as she listened to this well-merited reproof. Selina's fair countenance eloquently expressed the shame and disgust awakened in her mind by this public exposure of the woman who asserted herself to be her mother, as well as at the denunciation of the vile man who was thus proved to have been her associate. The magistrate next examined Selina, who, with a modest self-possession, related to him all the circumstances of both the *enlèvements*, and the fact that in the Captain, as he was called, she recognised the person who had forcibly carried her off from la Cava. While she spoke, Mrs. Lindsell cast appealing looks at her, but they were disregarded; and although she said nothing to criminate that lady, her fear and disgust of il Capitano were so strongly manifested in her countenance and manner, that the magistrate betrayed much sympathy for her.

" You are now, young lady," said he,

“ for ever released from all alarm from that vile person, who, whether actuated by some hidden motive of his own, or merely acting in compliance with the instructions of another,”—and here he looked sternly at Mrs. Lindsell,—“ has been the cause of so much terror and anxiety to you. With regard to you, Signora, the circumstances of this case are such, that in the absence of all proof to substantiate the assertions you have made that this young lady is your daughter, I find it my duty to detain you a prisoner, until the father of the Signorina comes forward.”

“ Me a prisoner!” exclaimed Mrs. Lindsell. “ You do not, cannot mean to perpetrate such an act of injustice!”

“ You stand here, Signora, as the acknowledged accomplice of a man whom you yourself have charged with felony. The abduction of la Signorina is a crime of deep dye, and until you have given proof that

she is your daughter, your freedom cannot be granted you. The Signorina I deliver to the safe custody of this respectable gentleman, whose age renders him a fit person for the charge, until the father, or the person empowered by him to receive her, shall arrive."

Oh! what a sweet smile played over the lips of Selina, when she heard this sentence pronounced; and how great was my rapture as I listened to it!

" You surely will not separate me from my daughter," said Mrs. Lindsell, " I am her proper, her natural protectress; suffer her to remain with me at least until her father arrives?"

" It would be unjust, Signora, to consign the innocent to a prison."

" But you put her into the hands of strangers, of whom you know nothing! Is it right, is it decent, that a young girl should be confided to a man, who stands in

no degree of relationship to her? It is monstrous, it is unheard of!"

"I will do that, madam, which I conceive to be my duty in this very peculiar case. For you, Signora, if the horrors of a prison affright you, I will relax the severity of justice, and permit you to reside a prisoner in a neighbouring convent, where you will be as strictly guarded, but more kindly dealt by, than in the prison. And now, Signor, (turning to Mr. Rivers,) I consign this young lady to your guardianship. You are not to leave Palermo until this mysterious affair is explained. Instructions were forwarded to Naples the day you set off to rescue la Signorina, that the lady to whom her father had given her in charge should immediately despatch intelligence to him of what has occurred, and come here herself by the next packet. She will, in all probability, arrive this evening, as the return packet is expected; and in the

meanwhile, my sister, an elderly and well reputed lady, will be the companion of la Signorina until her female friend arrives. She will reach your *albergo* in a few minutes, so you had better take this young lady there at once. And you, Messieurs," turning to two police officers, "conduct the prisoner to the Convent of Santa Rosalie, to the abbess of which, this note," and he wrote a few lines, "will explain my wishes."

"Selina, my child! my child!" exclaimed Mrs. Lindsell, "can you, will you leave your distracted mother? Oh! it is cruel, it is barbarous, thus to tear my daughter from me!"

Miss Somers approached her, and with a dignified gentleness, that touched all present, reminded her that she must now, as well as she had hitherto done, confine herself within the bounds of simple politeness, withholding all demonstrations of the affection and duty a child owed a parent, until

it was proved that she indeed stood in that relation to her."

"Cold-hearted, obdurate girl, how ill do you requite the foolish fondness that urged a doting mother to have recourse to desperate means to gain possession of you," and covering her face with her handkerchief; she left the office escorted by the police, while we conducted the lovely Selina to our inn, tears rolling down her cheeks at the reproaches of Mrs. Lindsell.

CHAPTER XX.

"I MUST appear a cold and heartless being to you," said Selina, "in parting thus with my mo——, but no, I do not, cannot believe she is my mother! My heart prompts me to disavow the affinity, and my lips cannot pronounce what my feelings deny."

Mr. Rivers and I soothed her to the utmost of our power, but it was evident that her feelings were deeply wounded by the extraordinary position in which she found herself, for she often interrupted us, saying, "Oh! if after all she should prove to

be my mother, how shall I reproach myself, how even pardon myself, for the indifference, the more than indifference, I feel towards her! Oh! it is dreadful."

The sister of the magistrate soon joined us at the *albergo*; she seemed a kind-hearted, sensible woman, and evinced a great deal of sympathy towards Selina, whom the presence of one of her own sex comforted and re-assured.

"I have endeavoured to recall to memory all the incidents and events of my childhood," said Selina, in reply to some observation of Mr. Rivers, "in order to know if there can be the least foundation for her statement of being my mother. I have a faint recollection of England, and of a kind nurse, and her tears and my grief at being taken from her by a gentleman who I was told was my papa: and I remember his conveying me to London, and when I wept in the carriage, his saying I was a naughty trouble-

some child, and shaking me roughly by the arm, and my being from that moment very much afraid of him. I remember also my having an English governess, who accompanied papa and me to Paris, and his conducting us to a house at St. Germains, in a very retired situation, with a garden, in which I used to play. My governess was very kind; and after some years I had masters who came from Paris to give me lessons. Papa very seldom visited me, and when he did, never shewed me any affection. When I grew up, I began to think it very strange that he did not like me, as I tried all I could to please him; but it was of no use; the more I endeavoured to please, the less he liked me, so I grew more and more shy, and afraid of him, and my good governess observing it, became, if possible, more kind and affectionate to me. Oh! the wretchedness of having a parent who does not love one! whom one

cannot win by docility and dutiful attention. Often did I then think, that if I had a mother, how tenderly I should love her. How I pictured to myself the support, the consolation, the blessing, she would be, until tears have rolled down my cheeks. Nay, the very name of mother sounded so sweetly, so softly, in my ears, that I associated with that dear and tender tie all that is most soothing and sweet in life. And now that one is found who asserts that title to my affections, and who professes to love me, my heart refuses to acknowledge her as a mother; and I find myself involuntarily shrinking from her caresses, and doubting her professions, as if some strong and secret instinct told me that she has no right to the affection and duty she claims. Alas! how sad is my fate. I turn with little less coldness and mistrust from him who calls himself my father, but from whom I have never yet received a parental caress or

blessing, as I do from her, who declares herself to be my mother, but whose caresses chill and revolt me!"

Selina ceased to speak, for tears impeded her utterance; and Mr. Rivers tenderly taking her hand, told her, that while he lived, she should ever find in him all the care and kindness of a father.

How was my attachment to Mr. Rivers enhanced by the deep interest and regard which he evidently entertained for this dear and artless girl!

"I continued to live in perfect seclusion at St. Germain's," resumed Selina, "never visiting Paris, and seldom seeing my father, until a year ago, when my dear, good governess was seized with a malady, which, alas! soon terminated fatally. When she became conscious of her danger, she sent for my father, and in a solemn manner consigned me to his care; invoking him to love and cherish me, and assuring him that

I was not unworthy of his affection. He heard her with evident impatience; and would fain have taken me with him to Paris, leaving my good, my tender governess, who had so often nursed me in illness, solely to the care of servants. But I so wept, and prayed not to be separated from her to the last, that he at length permitted me to remain, saying, ‘that if I chose to make myself ill by watching over a dying bed, where I could be of no possible use, as nothing could save her, I might take the consequences of my own folly.’ His hardness of heart, on this occasion, wounded me to the quick; and when, the next day, my dear and excellent friend expired, calling down blessings on my head, I almost wished to die too; for I felt I no longer had any one on earth who loved me. I pass over the sad, sad scene that preceded and followed her death. Even now, I cannot revert to it without grief;” and here

her tears flowed afresh. “ My father came for me the next day; took me to Paris, to a house in the Faubourg de Roule, where good Madame de Stourville was installed as my *gouvernante*; and in a short time afterwards, we were on our route through the south of France and Italy. That he should entrust an only child to a person, who, though highly recommended, was a total stranger to him, as well as to me, was such a proof of indifference, that it renewed my grief for the death of that dear and attached friend who had so carefully and tenderly studied my happiness. Fortunately for me, Madame de Stourville proved to be all good-nature and kindness; though her inexpérience in travelling, and her want of knowledge of the world, unfit her for being much more than an affectionate companion.”

Although the sister of the magistrate understood not a word of Selina’s narra-

tive, which had been spoken in her native tongue, the beautiful countenance, and tears of the fair speaker, produced such an effect on the warm-hearted Sicilian, that she more than once arose, and in an effusion of pity, kissed the forehead of the dear girl, exclaiming, “*Poveretta, cara figlia mia cara!*”

Our evening repast had only just been served, when the packet from Naples arrived, and I hurried to the pier to meet and escort Madame de Stourville to the *albergo*, Selina, as I left the room, thanking me with a look and a smile that might richly have repaid the greatest service.

Madame de Stourville had but just left the ship, and was animatedly reasoning with the custom-house officer on her right to have all her packages and bandboxes taken at once to the inn without any delay, while he, who understood not a word of French, was loudly vociferating, in Italian, that no

boxes or packages should be removed until a strict examination of their contents had taken place. When she saw me piercing the crowd of idlers who had gathered round to listen to the angry discussion, which was rendered amusing to the bystanders, owing to neither of the interlocutors understanding the language of the other, she exclaimed, with delight, "*Oh, mon Dieu ! quel plaisir, Monsieur Meredis, vous arrivez très heureusement, pour me sauver de ce terrible homme.* He is a-*barbare*, not know one word of de French language. *N'est ce pas, c'est choquant de rencontrer une ignorance pareille !*"

By a *douceur* conveyed into the hand of the custom-house officer, I quickly obtained permission to have the boxes of Madame de Stourville merely opened for appearance sake, and then sent to our hotel, to which I conducted that lady herself.

Madame de Stourville's joy at again em-

bracing Selina was really touching. She wept and smiled by turns, asked a thousand questions, never giving time to have any of them answered, and by her volubility and exaggeration of manner excited the wonder of the quiet sister of the magistrate, who now took her leave, affectionately embracing her "*cara poveretta*,"—as she called Selina,—and offering her services in any or every way in which they could be made available.

Madame de Stourville told us, that previously to her leaving Naples she had written to Mr. Somers, and informed him of all that had occurred; and that, therefore, his presence might in due time be looked for at Palermo. When acquainted that Mrs. Lindsell claimed Selina for her daughter, the anger and indignation of the old lady knew no bounds.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE next day Madame de Stourville saw the magistrate, and gave her deposition of having had the charge of Miss Somers consigned to her by the father of that young lady. It was signified to us, that nothing further could be done in the affair until the arrival of Mr. Somers—an event anticipated with little pleasure by any one of the party, but to which we all resigned ourselves as well as we could.

Happy were the hours that intervened between the coming of Madame de Stour-

ville and that of Mr. Somers. During one of our daily walks, when the *gouvernante* and Mr. Rivers were listening to Mr. O'De-nessy's details of some interesting antiquities lately discovered in the neighbourhood, I seized the opportunity of revealing my pas-sion to the lovely object who had inspired it. I felt her arm tremble within mine; I saw her head gently turned, as if to conceal her blushes, as I passionately conjured her to tell me if I might hope that I was not wholly indifferent to her. I said that if she would give me hope, I would pledge myself to conciliate her father by every means in my power; and that as neither my family nor fortune were objectionable, I trusted that he might be induced to bestow her hand on me.

“ I am deeply sensible of the generosity of your conduct,” replied Selina. “ The offer you have made me, and at a moment when my position is so painful a one, that

even my birth seems shrouded in mystery, proves the sincerity of your attachment, and the delicacy and generosity of your sentiments, but——”

“ Oh! Selina—dear, lovely Selina!” interrupted I, “only say that I am not to despair—only tell me that you do not forbid me to solicit your father, and I will ask no more!”

“ But ought I, Mr. Meredith, to accord this sanction until it is known to whom I really belong?”—and her voice became still more tremulous from emotion.

“ Yes, lovely Selina, you ought—you will—nay, you must grant me this permission, unless you wish to make me the most wretched of men. Give me that dear little hand in token of assent, and I will bless you!”

The little hand, trembling like a frightened bird, was held out to me; and as I pressed it within mine, I would not have

changed the hope of its future entire possession for an empire! I bent forward to steal a glance at her beautiful face, and never before had I seen it so transcendently lovely. Covered with blushes, the downcast lids of her darkly-fringed eyes were begemmed with tears; yet a sweet smile parted her rosy lips, and told that those precious drops were not tears of sorrow.

There was something unspeakably touching in the whole air and manner of Selina during the rest of that day. A timidity and sweet consciousness of our engagement, mingled with an effort to appear unembarrassed as usual, rendered her still more captivating than ever in my eyes. Wishing to spare her feelings in the presence of our friends, I forbore, as much as my passion would permit, from any of those demonstrations of attentions which my heart prompted; and she more than once during

the evening thanked me with her eyes for my forbearance.

A week, a blissful week, rolled away; during which every day, every hour, brought to light some new quality in Selina, and rendered her dearer to me. When walking by her side, I would describe my home, and dwell with delight on future plans of happiness when she should be its adored mistress. She would listen with pleasure, and approve my schemes for adorning it; would even suggest some little plans of her own, and at length scrupled not to avow that her heart would be as desolate as my own, should the bright prospect now held out be doomed to disappointment.

Mr. Rivers was not unobservant of our attachment; and deeming it to be his duty, he spoke to me seriously on the subject, pointing out all that wisdom could dictate on the imprudence of entering into an en-

gagement with a person whose parentage seemed so doubtful, and whose father might never consent to our union. He admitted that the superiority of Selina, both in mind and person, were such as to justify my attachment, but thought it unfair, even towards her, to engage her affections before I could count on my addresses being sanctioned by her father.

The counsel came too late, and I avowed that it had, for I entertained such confidence in the friendship of Mr. Rivers that I could not now be disingenuous with him. He shook his head, wished that I had been less precipitate, and hoped that Mr. Somers might be more considerate to the happiness of his amiable daughter than he had hitherto, from all we had heard, proved himself to be.

“ Your family and fortune might entitle you to form any alliance,” observed Mr. Rivers, “ and should render you a very

desirable husband in the eyes of Mr. Somers, whatever his own wealth may be; but with a man so eccentric as he seems to be, there is little confidence to be placed on the motives that may influence him in giving or withholding his consent to his fair daughter's union with you."

Two days after this conversation, Mr. Somers arrived at Palermo. The announcement of this event blanched the cheek of Selina with a deadly paleness, and produced such a tremor in her frame, that it was piteous to behold her. Madame de Stourville also betrayed evident symptoms of alarm when summoned to his presence, and asked Mr. Rivers to accompany her, that he might assist in the explanation she had to give, and shield her from the first outbreak of Mr. Somers's anger. When the three left the room—for Selina had gone with her *gouvernante* and Mr. Rivers—I felt a presentiment of evil that filled my breast with

inquietude and gloom. The alarm evinced by Selina and Madame de Stourville at this approaching interview with Mr. Somers, proclaimed how harsh and stern that gentleman must be, and quelled the hope that for days I had been nourishing in my heart. I paced the chamber rapidly, pausing every five minutes to listen whether any sound might be heard. I went into the passage, almost tempted to become an eavesdropper, so great was my anxiety and impatience to learn what was going on; and again I returned to the deserted *salon*, and endeavoured to occupy my thoughts by writing to Selina, and painting to her the state of my feelings. But even this task I could not accomplish, so great was the agitation I experienced; so, casting away the pen, and tearing into fragments the paper I had written on, I again paced the room. On one of the tables assigned for Selina's use lay the book I had been reading aloud

to her that morning. An unfinished sketch from her pencil was beside it, and a glass containing a bouquet of flowers I had presented to her stood in the centre. These little marks of domesticity appealed to my feelings with irresistible force; they recalled the happy hours I had lately been passing in this now deserted room, and I fancied I had never previously valued them as I now did, when in all probability I should enjoy them no more.

At length Mr. Rivers returned alone. His countenance announced that the interview with Mr. Somers had not been an agreeable one; and I felt my fears confirmed before he had time to speak.

“ He is a strange man, and a harsh and unreasonable one too,” said he. “ He seems to forget the good fortune of his daughter having been rescued, and restored to him, in the anger in which he indulges against poor, helpless Madame de Stourville, whom

he blames for the *enlèvement* having occurred. He used little ceremony or courtesy in commenting on her impropriety in permitting you and myself to accompany them to Pæstum, and to reside at the same hotel with them here, adding, in reply to her asseverations of our kindness, and the protection we had afforded to her young lady and herself, the zeal we had evinced, and the assistance we had afforded, in rescuing Miss Somers, ‘that this offered no justification for her having disobeyed his orders to permit his daughter to form no acquaintance while under her care.’ His reception of Selina had been most cold and heartless. He did not embrace or even shake hands with her, and when she could not repress the tears this unkindness called forth, he told her that he supposed, now that she fancied herself a heroine of romance, tears were indispensable on every occasion. The only circumstance that seemed to make an impression on him,

was when I informed him that a lady had now claimed Miss Somers as her daughter. He started, and his face became flushed with anger. ‘And where is this person?’ demanded he. I informed him that she was in safe custody; when he, with a most malignant expression of countenance, declared that if he could accomplish it, she should never again be restored to liberty. I asked permission to present you; and I noticed that when I mentioned your name, he started, and inquired, ‘whether you were not the son of Mr. Spencer Meredith, of Meredith Park?’ I answered in the affirmative; and he, after pausing for a moment, replied, that being now fatigued by his long journey from Paris, and recent voyage, he must decline the introduction until tomorrow, and having bowed me out, I withdrew, leaving poor Miss Somers and her *gouvernante* with him.”

We saw no more of Selina or Madame de

Stourville that night ; but one of the waiters came to remove all the various little articles that belonged to both. When questioned by Mr. Rivers, why he did so, he informed us that *il signor padre de la signorina* had ordered that everything appertaining to the ladies should be conveyed to the *salon* at the other side of the hotel, which he had engaged, and in which their repasts were to be served. This statement seemed to be a confirmation of my worst fears ; for it clearly indicated a determination of excluding us from that intercourse which had lately formed the happiness of my life, and I sought my pillow that night in a state of mind very different to any of the last few preceding ones, when the certainty of meeting the object of my heart's dearest affections was the last thought ere sleeping, and the first that presented itself on awaking.

After a painfully restless night, I arose early, and, having hurried through the duties

of my *matinal* toilette, descended to the *salon*. Mr. Rivers had not yet made his appearance, but soon after I entered the room, the door opened, and the head of Madame de Stourville exhibited itself. Seeing me alone, she quickly came in, carefully closed the door, and burst into tears. “Oh, my young friend!” exclaimed she, “you know not—you cannot know what *ce cher ange* and I have had to undergo since we saw you last. Oh, dat cruel man, he is a *barbare* and *tyran*, and I would give him my demission dis very day, and return to *ma belle France*, only I cannot bear to leave *ce pauvre cher ange* alone, in the power of such a wicked *tyran*. He blames me for all, and is *furieux*, and did call me ‘*vieille folle—moi!* *Marie Antoinette de Stourville*, *vieille folle*, dat has not yet forty years. *O! c'est trop mal, beaucoup trop mal!* but I will write to Paris, and get de certificate of my baptism, and shew it to him, for I vill not be called

vieille, dat I vill not. Ce cher pauvre ange," resumed Madame de Stourville, "is forbidden to see you or Monsieur Rivére any more, except in the presence of Monsieur Somers, and he does not wish to see either of you if he can help it. She be very unhappy, and cry, cry, enough to make any one *miserable* to see her. But I must go to *ce cher pauvre ange*, and if *notre merchant tyran* know I did come here, he would send me avay from her for ever. *Mon Dieu ! quel horrible homme*, to call me *vieille folle, n'est-ce pas c'est une infamie ?*"

I asked Madame de Stourville whether she would take charge of a few lines from me to Selina; but she positively refused. "No, no, *mon ami*; it would not be right, not honourable, and Marie Antoinette de Stourville could not do vat is not honourable."

"Will you, then, dear, good Madame de

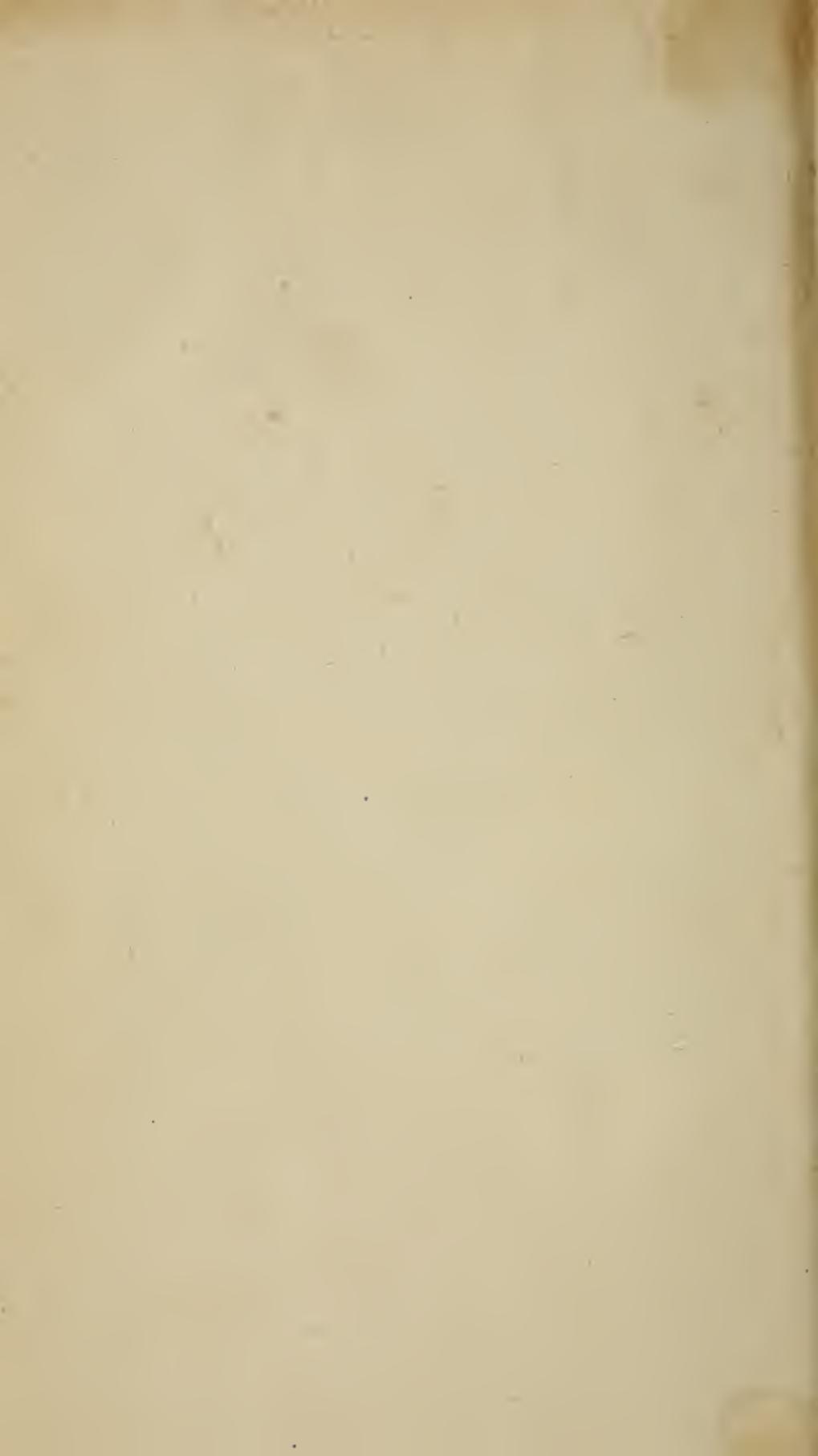
Stourville, tell her how much I grieve, how much I suffer by this cruel separation."

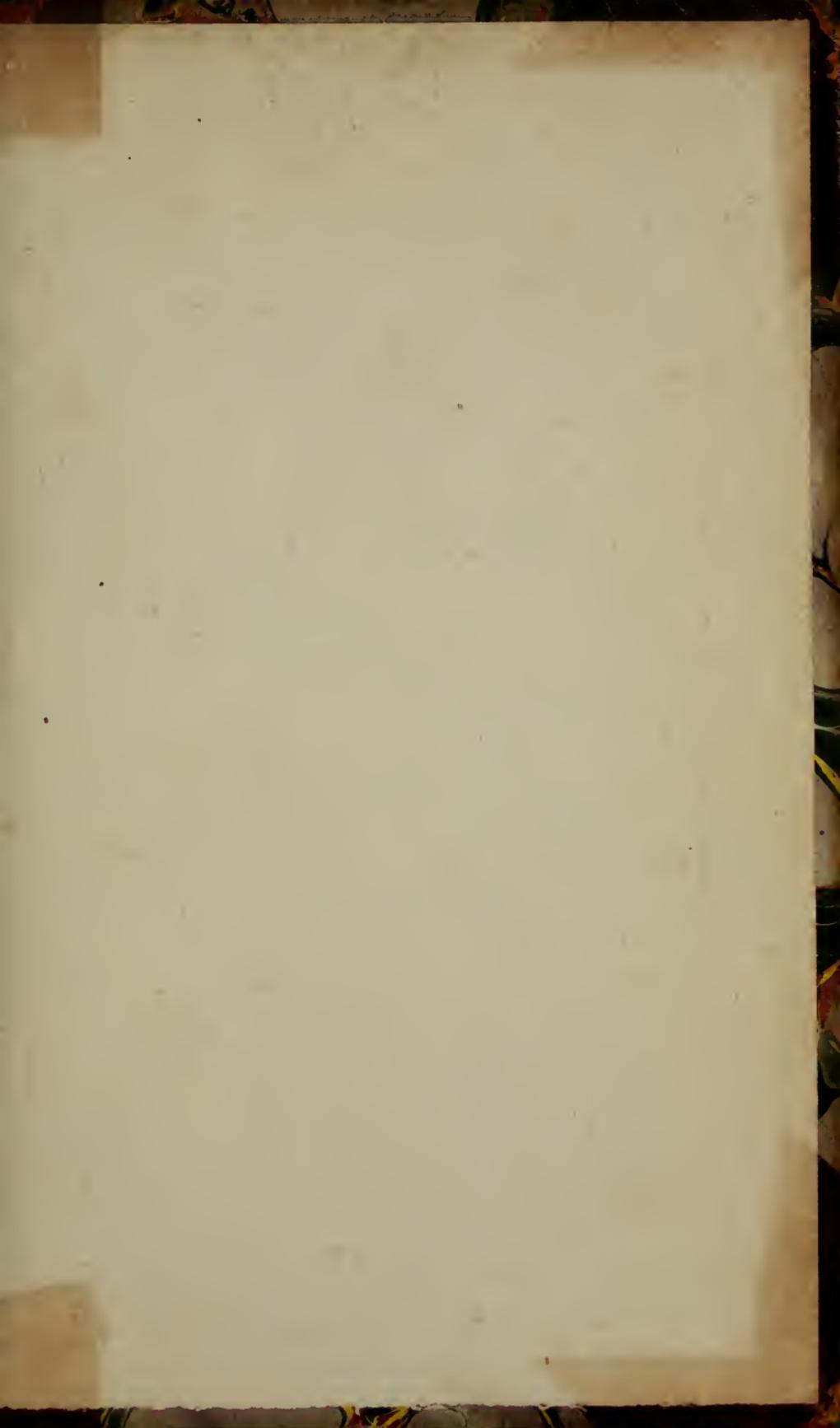
"I will tell her you are always her good friend, and very sorry not to see her, but I must not tell more, it would be wrong; so adieu, *mon cher Monsieur Meredis*, *dites mille choses aimables de ma part a Monsieur Rivére*, but do not tell to him that Monsieur Somers did call me *vieille folle*, for he might demand *raison* of dat *tyran* for such a calumny against me, and I vould not be de cause of a duel between dese gentlemen for all de vorld."

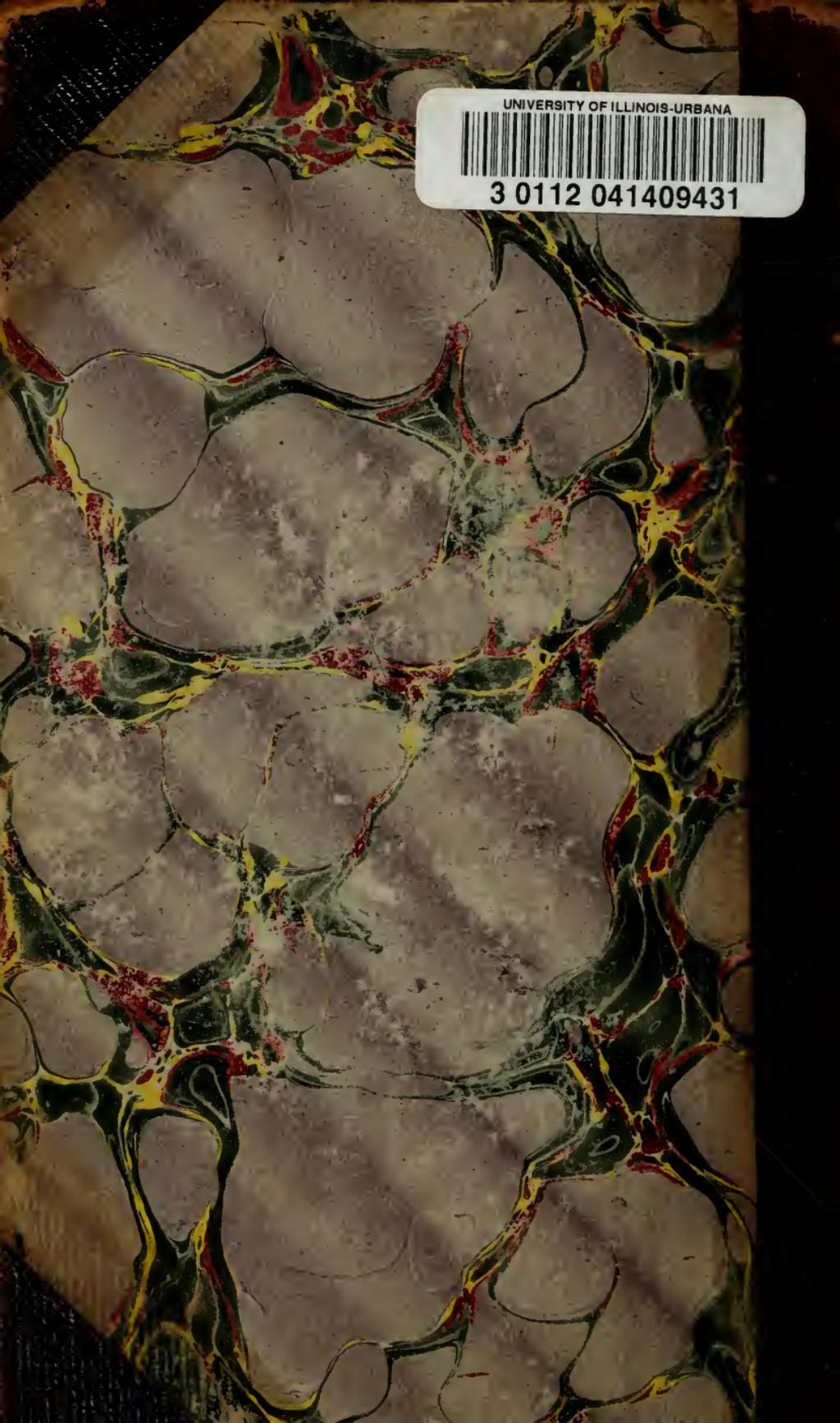
At any other moment, I should have been amused at the ludicrous anger of poor Madame de Stourville at being called old, and at her anxiety not to have this charge repeated to Mr. Rivers, whom, it was now plain, she took for granted entertained a more than ordinary interest for her, as she proved by the supposition that he would

resent—nay, fight a duel with the person who made such an assertion. But my whole soul was occupied by one single thought, and that was, my dread of being separated from Selina; and consequently, the weakness and folly of the good-natured old Frenchwoman passed without comment when Mr. Rivers joined me.

END OF VOL. II.







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